WWII

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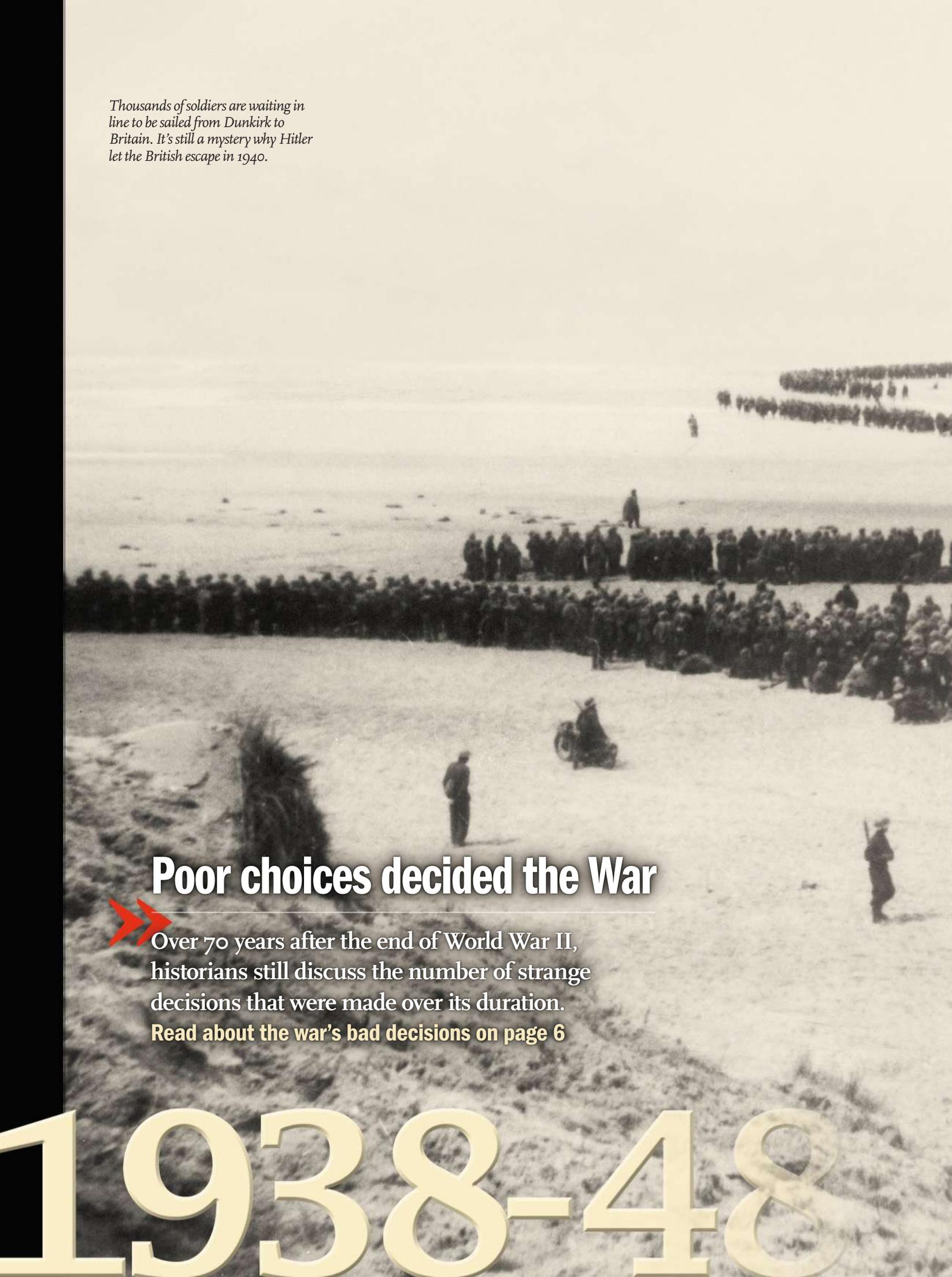
War mysteries still unsolved

Nazi propaganda presented Adolf Hitler as ascetic, solitary and a brilliant Führer. Only a few knew the real man behind World War II.

His mystery has fuelled numerous conspiracy theories – like why Hitler's own decisions were sometimes was so strange that neither his contemporaries nor posterity can explain the Führer's bizarre choices. Why did he turn the Luftwaffe's terror bombing of Britain from military targets to civilian ones? Why did Hitler issue the Wehrmacht with a stop order just before Dunkirk? And why did he hate Jews so much that millions of people died?

Bringing History to Life gets close to World War II's unsolved mysteries and gives historians its best guess at some of the answers.

Happy reading!



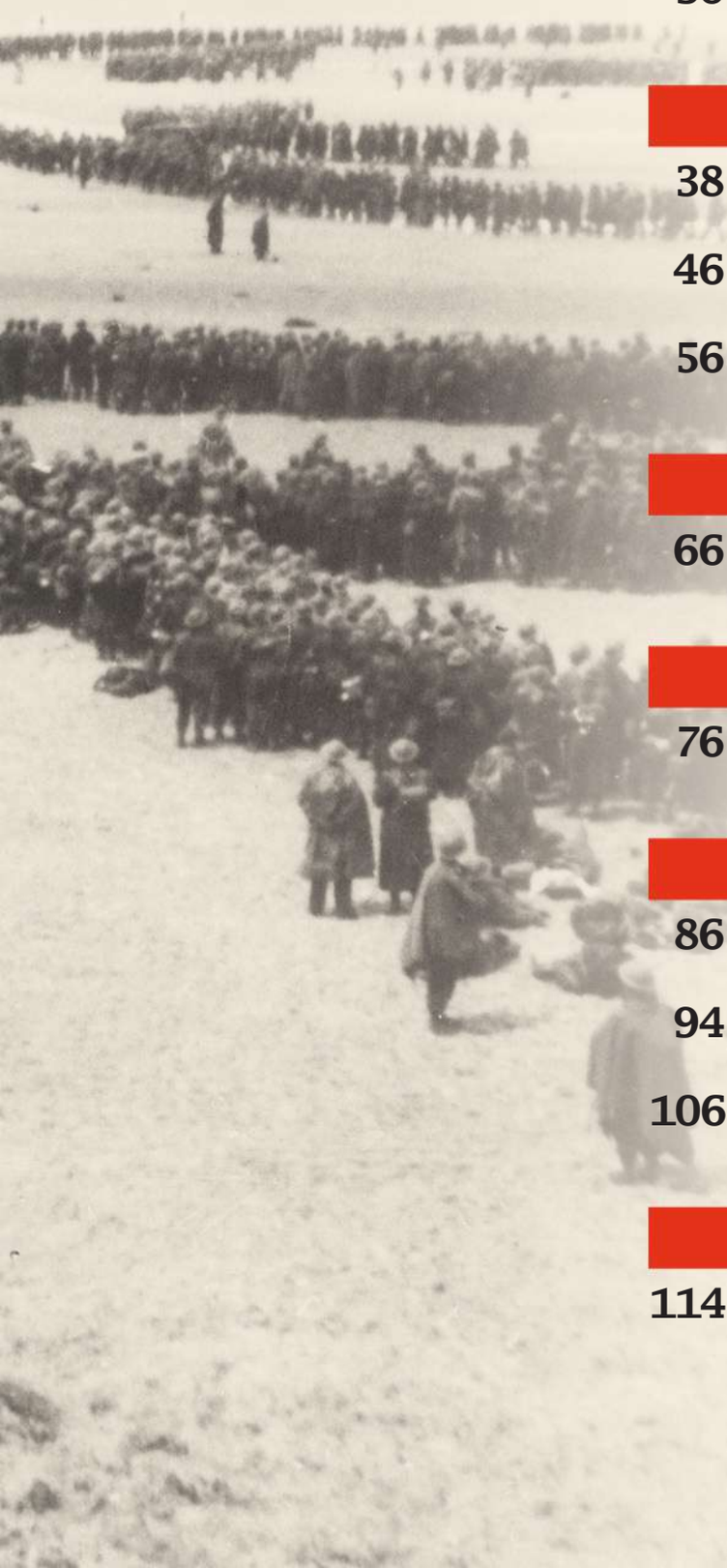
Thousands of soldiers are waiting in line to be sailed from Dunkirk to Britain. It's still a mystery why Hitler let the British escape in 1940.

Poor choices decided the War

Over 70 years after the end of World War II, historians still discuss the number of strange decisions that were made over its duration.

Read about the war's bad decisions on page 6

1938-48



1938

12 **Nazis search for ancestors in the Himalayas**
Why did the Nazis believe that Aryans originated from Tibet?

1940

20 **200,000 British escape the German Army**
What made it possible for the Allies to flee from Dunkirk?

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Nazi scientists hunt for origins

1938 Nazi ideologists are convinced that the Aryan race originates from the Tibetan Plateau. Heinrich Himmler believes if the theory is proved, it will give the Germans a natural claim to Lebensraum in the east. In 1938, the SS leader equips an expedition to find Aryan genes among the Himalayan people.

Read about the expedition on page 12

13TH JANUARY: a Church of England commission concludes that the theory of evolution does not conflict with the Bible's account of creation.

13TH MARCH: Germany occupies Austria and absorbs it into the Third Reich.

17TH JUNE: Japan officially declares war on China.

19TH JUNE: Italy retains the football World Cup in Paris.

15TH SEPTEMBER: Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain visits Hitler in Germany.

9TH NOVEMBER: German Nazis destroy Jewish buildings. The event is called Kristallnacht – Night of Broken Glass.

10TH DECEMBER: Enrico Fermi, later the "architect of the atom bomb", receives the Nobel Prize in Physics.

24TH JANUARY, 1939: an earthquake measuring 8.3 on the Richter scale kills around 28,000 in southern Chile.

27TH FEBRUARY: Britain and France formally recognise the Franco regime that has conquered most of Spain.

7TH APRIL: Italy invades Albania and rapidly overruns the country within days.

17TH JUNE: Eugen Weidmann is the last person in France to be executed by public guillotine.

23RD AUGUST: signatories for the Soviet Union and Germany sign a pact in Moscow whereby the countries mutually promise not to attack each other and divide up Eastern Europe.

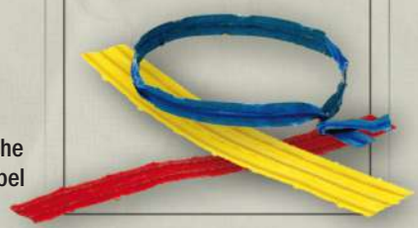
1ST SEPTEMBER: Germany invades Poland. The invasion marks the beginning of World War II.

1ST OCTOBER: Churchill describes the Soviet Union as "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma".

1ST NOVEMBER: the first animal conceived by artificial insemination – a rabbit – is displayed publicly in the US.

Bag seals improve housewives' lives

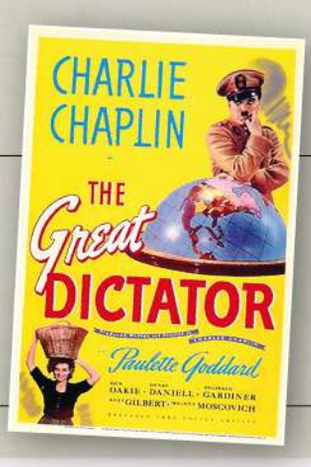
1939: reusable bag seal clips – metal wire embedded in a thin strip of paper – are patented by a Californian packaging company.



1938-39

Chaplin skewers Hitler on film

1940: as the war rages in Europe, "The Dictator" is premiered in the United States. Chaplin plays the lead role as dictator Hynkel.



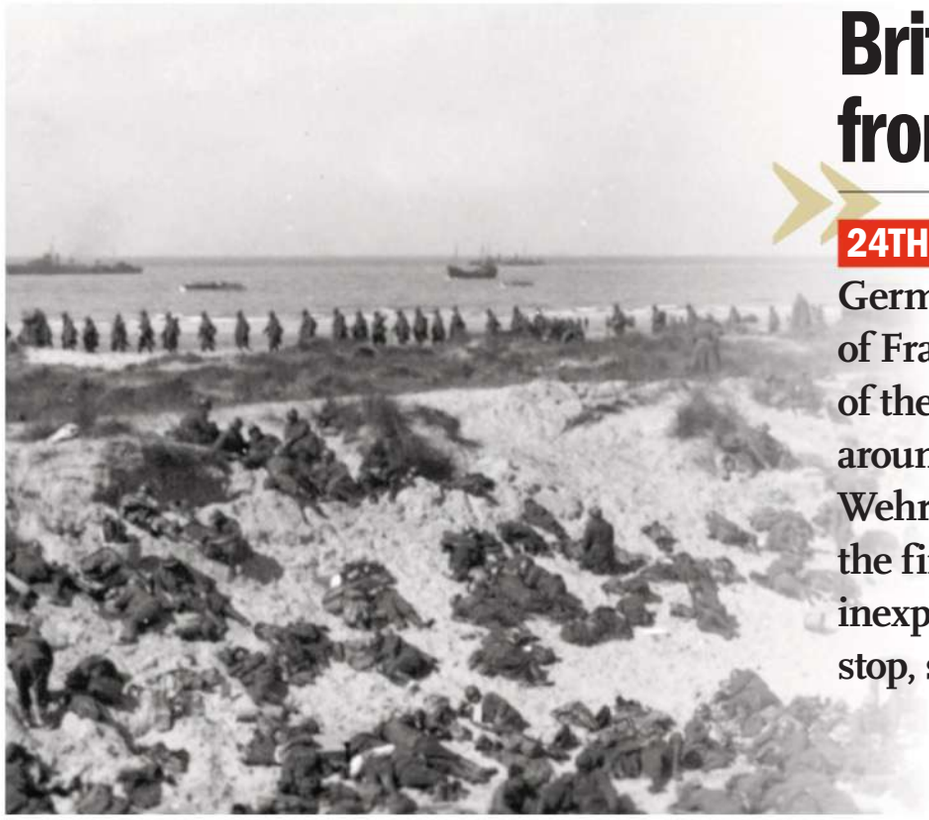
8TH JANUARY: Britain introduces the rationing of bacon, butter and sugar.

10TH FEBRUARY: "In the Mood" by Glenn Miller and his Orchestra hits the top of the charts where it remains in place for 13 weeks.

13TH MARCH: Winter War in Finland ends.

9TH APRIL: Germany invades Denmark and Norway.

10TH MAY: Winston Churchill succeeds Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister.



British escape from France

24TH MAY After a blitzkrieg, Germany has conquered most of France and isolated remnants of the British Army are left around Dunkirk. The Wehrmacht is ready to deliver the final blow when Hitler inexplicably orders the army to stop, so the British can get away.

Read about the strange stop order on page 20

14TH JUNE: German forces roll into Paris and France surrenders shortly afterwards.

25TH JUNE: Hitler visits the Eiffel Tower and other tourist attractions in Paris, including Napoleon's tomb.

10TH JULY: German planes attack convoys in the English Channel to start the Battle of Britain. The Luftwaffe targets RAF aircraft and runways.

21ST JULY: the Soviet Union annexes Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on the Baltic coast.

13TH AUGUST: the Battle of Britain enters its main phase, as German air forces ratchet up attacks in southern England.

26TH AUGUST: Chad in Africa, led by colonial governor Félix Eboué, becomes the first French colony to enter the war on the side of the Allies.

16TH NOVEMBER: the RAF bombs Hamburg in retaliation to the destruction of Coventry two days earlier.

9TH DECEMBER: British forces in North Africa initiate the first major offensive with an attack on the Italians in Egypt.

Hitler gives historians headaches

1940 Where did Hitler's fanatical hatred of the Jews come from? Was the Führer seriously ill? And why were the family opposed to him? Many of the dictator's puzzles still have no answer.

Read up on the mysteries on page 30



1940

23RD FEBRUARY: American Glenn Seaborg produces plutonium, which will later be used in the first atomic bomb.

4TH MARCH: in a raid in northern Norway, British soldiers discover German Enigma machine codebooks.

Jew spies for the Nazis

APRIL Germans need intelligence on the Middle East and release Paul Fackenheim from the Dachau concentration camp. The Jew is trained as a spy before he's parachuted into Palestine.

Read about Paul Fackenheim on page 38

Rudolf Hess flies away

10TH MAY Hitler's former deputy Rudolf Hess heads for Scotland on 10th May. He's flying solo, and no one in Nazi top brass is clear about what exactly he's doing in Britain.

Read about Hess's plane flight on page 46



German attack surprises Stalin

22ND JUNE In midsummer, millions of German soldiers pour over the border into the Soviet Union. Dictator Joseph Stalin is completely unprepared, having chosen to ignore numerous warnings about the attack.

Read about Stalin's stubbornness on page 56

25TH JUNE: Soviet planes bomb 18 Finnish towns. War between Finland and the Soviet Union flares up again.

15TH JULY: Australian pharmacist Howard Florey starts the first clinical trials of penicillin in Oxford.

20TH JULY: inspired by Winston Churchill's salute, the BBC launches the "V for Victory" campaign across Europe.

9TH AUGUST: Churchill and Roosevelt formulate the Atlantic Charter, a vision of the world after the war and the first step towards NATO.

22ND AUGUST: German troops reach Leningrad.

25TH AUGUST: British and Soviet troops attack pro-German Iran. Two days later the Shah abdicates, leaving the throne to his son.

3RD SEPTEMBER: Karl Fritzsch uses a cyanide-based insecticide, Zyklon B, to execute Russian prisoners in Auschwitz.

8TH SEPTEMBER: the Siege of Leningrad begins.

13TH SEPTEMBER: flying pioneer Charles Lindbergh claims that British and US governments are colluding with the Jews to lure the United States into the war.

23RD SEPTEMBER: General Charles de Gaulle forms a French government-in-exile in London.

18TH OCTOBER: German spy Richard Sorge arrested in Tokyo.

26TH NOVEMBER: a fleet of six Japanese aircraft carriers heads for Pearl Harbor, shrouded in deepest secrecy.

7TH DECEMBER: Japanese planes bomb Pearl Harbor, drawing the US into the war.

Roosevelt travels in Al Capone's Cadillac

8TH DECEMBER: President Roosevelt allegedly uses a luxury car seized from Al Capone for transport around Washington.



1941

1ST JANUARY: the US signs a joint declaration with several other countries against the Axis powers. It states that no independent peace agreements may be concluded.

2ND JANUARY: Japanese troops occupy Manila in the Philippines.

7TH JANUARY: Battle of Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines begins. The battle ends with a crushing Japanese victory.

13TH JANUARY: pilot Helmut Schenk is the first to shoot himself out of a plane using an ejector seat.

Future boxing legend is born in the US

17TH JANUARY: Cassius Marcellus Clay is born in Louisville, Kentucky. He will later be known as world heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali.



24TH FEBRUARY: for several hours, air defence artillery in Los Angeles fire at reported targets in the air. The identity of these targets is never known.

4TH JUNE: the Japanese navy attacks Midway Atoll in the Pacific, losing four large aircraft carriers in the process.

21ST NOVEMBER: cartoon character Tweety Pie makes his first appearance in the US.

2ND FEBRUARY, 1943: the Battle of Stalingrad ends with the surrender of the German 6th Army. 91,000 are taken captive.

28TH FEBRUARY: Norwegian resistance fighters carry out an act of sabotage against a heavy water plant at Rjukan.

22ND MARCH: occupying German troops massacre almost all residents of the village of Khatyn in Belarus.



B-24 bomber disappears

4TH APRIL US plane *Lady Be Good* vanishes without trace after an aborted bombing raid on Italy. The wreck is discovered in the North African desert some years later. No one knows for sure why the aircraft went off course.

Read about the crash on page 66

19TH APRIL: an uprising in the Warsaw ghetto breaks out when Nazi troops enter to arrest any remaining Jews.

13TH MAY: German Afrika Korps and Italian troops surrender to Field Marshal Montgomery.

4TH JULY: a B-24 bomber carrying Władysław Sikorski, head of the Polish government-in-exile, crashes in mysterious circumstances.

5TH JULY: the Battle of Kursk, one of history's largest tank battles, begins. The Germans suffer a serious defeat.

10TH JULY: the Allied invasion of Europe begins when troops from the US and Britain successfully land in Sicily.

19TH JULY: the Allies bomb Rome, capital of Italy.

25TH JULY: Italian dictator Benito Mussolini is arrested.

2ND AUGUST: John F Kennedy's torpedo boat is sunk by a Japanese destroyer. The future president survives and is rescued after six days.

8TH SEPTEMBER: Italians surrender to the Allies.

28TH OCTOBER: the so-called Philadelphia Experiment – and likely hoax – allegedly makes US ship the *USS Eldridge* invisible for a short period.

5TH NOVEMBER: during Allied bombardment of Rome, four bombs hit the Vatican, which has remained neutral in the war.

23RD NOVEMBER: the Deutsche Oper Berlin opera house is destroyed by an air strike.

4TH DECEMBER: partisan leader Josip Tito proclaims a provisional government-in-exile of Yugoslavia.

1942-43



14TH JANUARY: Soviet troops begin offensives at Leningrad and Novgorod.

19TH MARCH: German forces occupy Hungary, just as the country looks like abandoning the Axis alliance.

24TH MARCH: 76 RAF prisoners escape through a tunnel from the Stalag Luft III camp. All but three are recaptured.

German troops receive new weapon

APRIL: the StG 44 assault rifle can fire up to 600 rounds per minute. The gun proves its worth on the Eastern Front, but arrives too late to have a decisive impact on the war.

28TH APRIL: during a rehearsal for D-Day, German gunboats attack an Allied convoy. 749 US soldiers are killed.

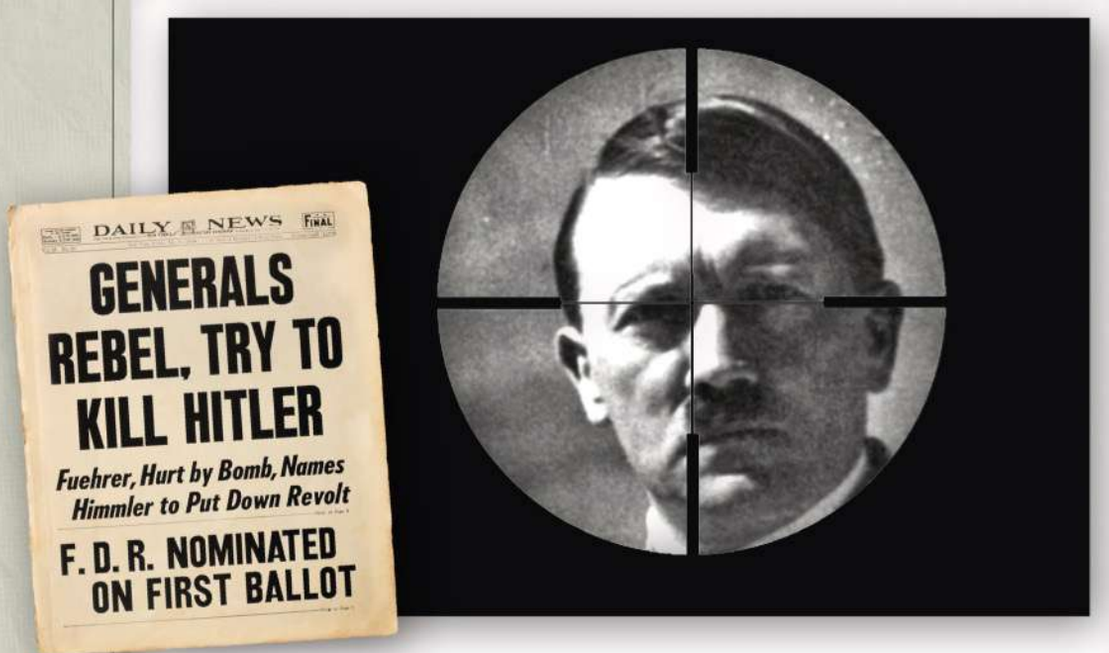
18TH MAY: German troops evacuate Monte Cassino in Italy shortly before it's occupied by Polish forces.

31ST MAY: frigate *USS England* sinks six Japanese submarines in two weeks – a record.

Weird choices determine war

1944 Germans go into the Soviet Union without winter gear, and Japan attacks Pearl Harbor. Smarter decisions could have led to a different outcome for the war.

Read about strange decisions on page 86



British abort plot to kill Hitler

JUNE 1944 Adolf Hitler walks alone every morning near his house in the South German Alps. The British plan to take advantage of the Führer's habit to attempt an assassination. The intelligence service is in the process of sourcing suitable snipers when the scheme is suddenly dropped for unclear reasons.

Read about the abandoned assassination on page 76

4TH AUGUST: an anonymous tip-off leads to the arrest of Anne Frank and her family. The identity of the informant remains unknown.

24TH AUGUST: the Allies enter and liberate Paris.

19TH SEPTEMBER: Finland and the Soviet Union sign a truce that finally ends the Continuation War.

14TH OCTOBER: Field Marshal Erwin Rommel chooses to commit suicide rather than be executed on suspicion of conspiring against Adolf Hitler.

7TH NOVEMBER: President Franklin D Roosevelt wins a fourth term in office.

13TH DECEMBER: the Allies announce that pilots have seen UFOs in the sky over Europe and the Pacific – the phenomenon is known as "Foo fighter". After the war, it turns out that German and Japanese pilots also saw the same phenomenon.

16TH DECEMBER: Germany launches its final counter-offensive in the Ardennes.

30TH DECEMBER: George II of Greece hands the throne over to a Regent.

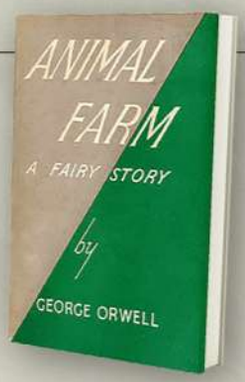
1944

Iwo Jima costs great sacrifices

19TH FEBRUARY After a massive naval bombardment, US forces land on the island of Iwo Jima. The invasion is much costlier in lives than expected – and perhaps the capture of the tiny Pacific island isn't even necessary.

Read about the battle on page 94





Stalin era revealed in satirical Orwell novel

17TH AUGUST: George Orwell publishes Animal Farm, an allegory of the development of the Soviet Union from 1917 to Stalin.

24TH OCTOBER: 29 countries sign the United Nations Charter. The intergovernmental organisation will promote cooperation and attempt to prevent future conflicts.

16TH NOVEMBER: Charles de Gaulle is elected president of a provisional French government.

5TH DECEMBER: five aircraft go missing in the area later dubbed the Bermuda Triangle.

Nazi Gold is tucked away

7TH APRIL While the Third Reich collapses, huge amounts of stolen Nazi gold are taken out of Berlin – some of which has never been found.

Read about the gold's fate on page 106

9TH APRIL: battle for the town of Königsberg in East Prussia ends when Soviet troops finally overwhelm German defences.

11TH APRIL: US Army liberates Buchenwald concentration camp.

12TH APRIL: Roosevelt dies and Harry S Truman becomes President of the United States.

16TH APRIL: the final battle for Berlin begins.

28TH APRIL: Benito Mussolini and his mistress are executed by Italian partisans.

30TH APRIL: Hitler and Eva Braun commit suicide in Berlin.

4TH MAY: German prison ship *SS Cap Arcona* is sunk. Over 4,000 people die.

4TH MAY: German forces in Holland, North-West Germany and Denmark surrender.

7TH MAY: Colonel General Alfred Jodl signs Germany's unconditional surrender in Reims, France.

16TH JULY: the world's first atomic bomb is tested in the US.

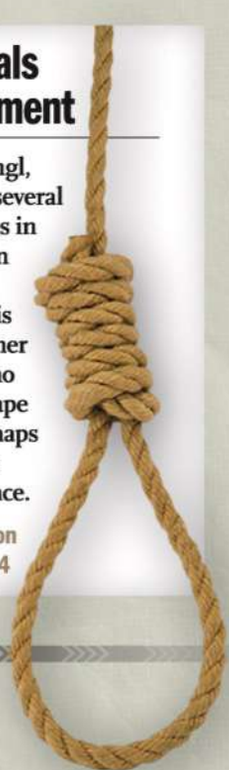
6TH AUGUST: Hiroshima is the first target for an atomic bomb. Three days later, bomb number two is dropped on Nagasaki.

14TH AUGUST: Emperor Hirohito accepts Japan's unconditional surrender.

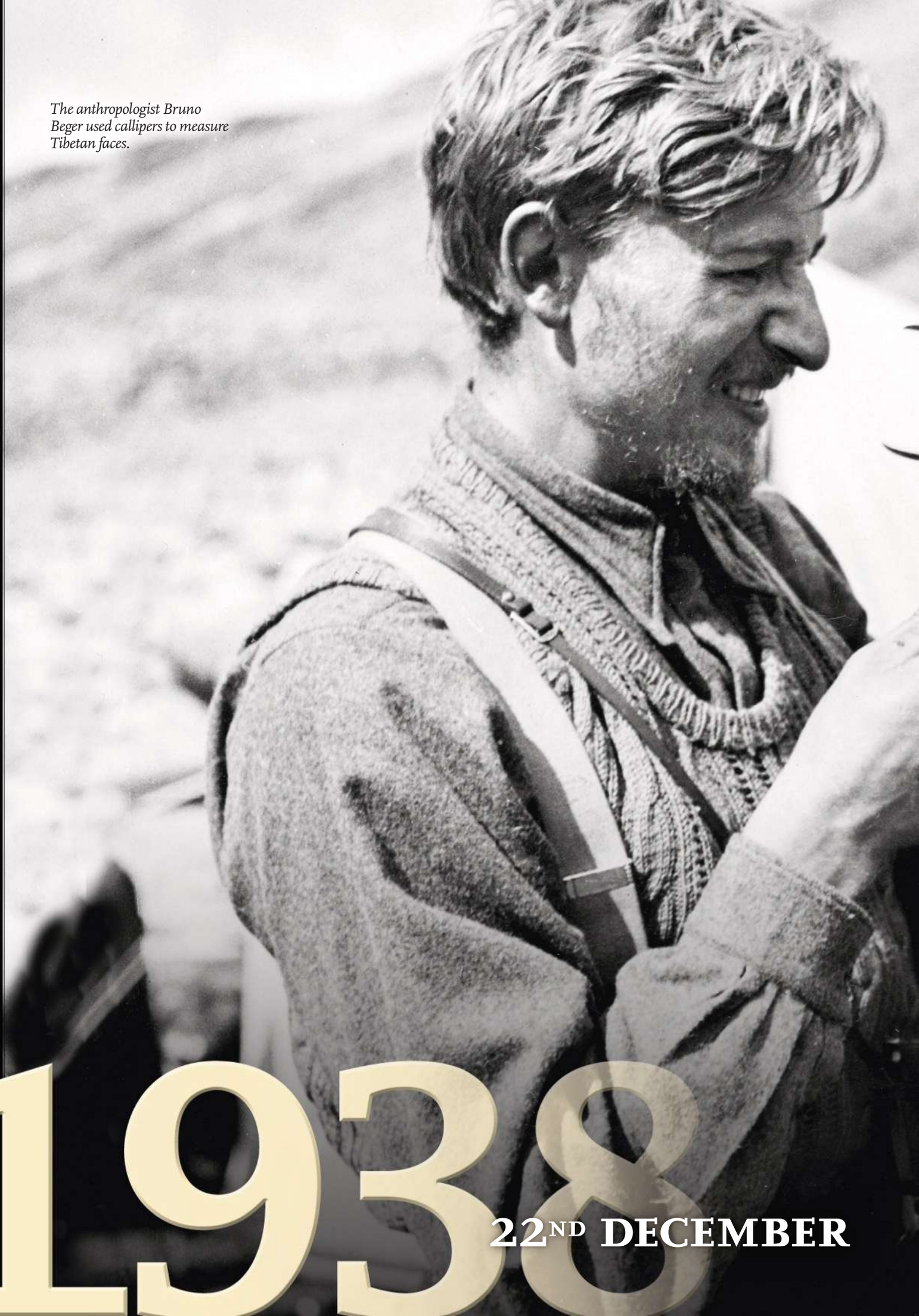
War criminals flee punishment

1948 Franz Stangl, commandant of several KZ camps, arrives in Rome in secret on his way to South America. Stangl is one of many former war criminals who are helped to escape prosecution, perhaps with the Catholic Church's assistance.

Read about Nazis on the run on page 114



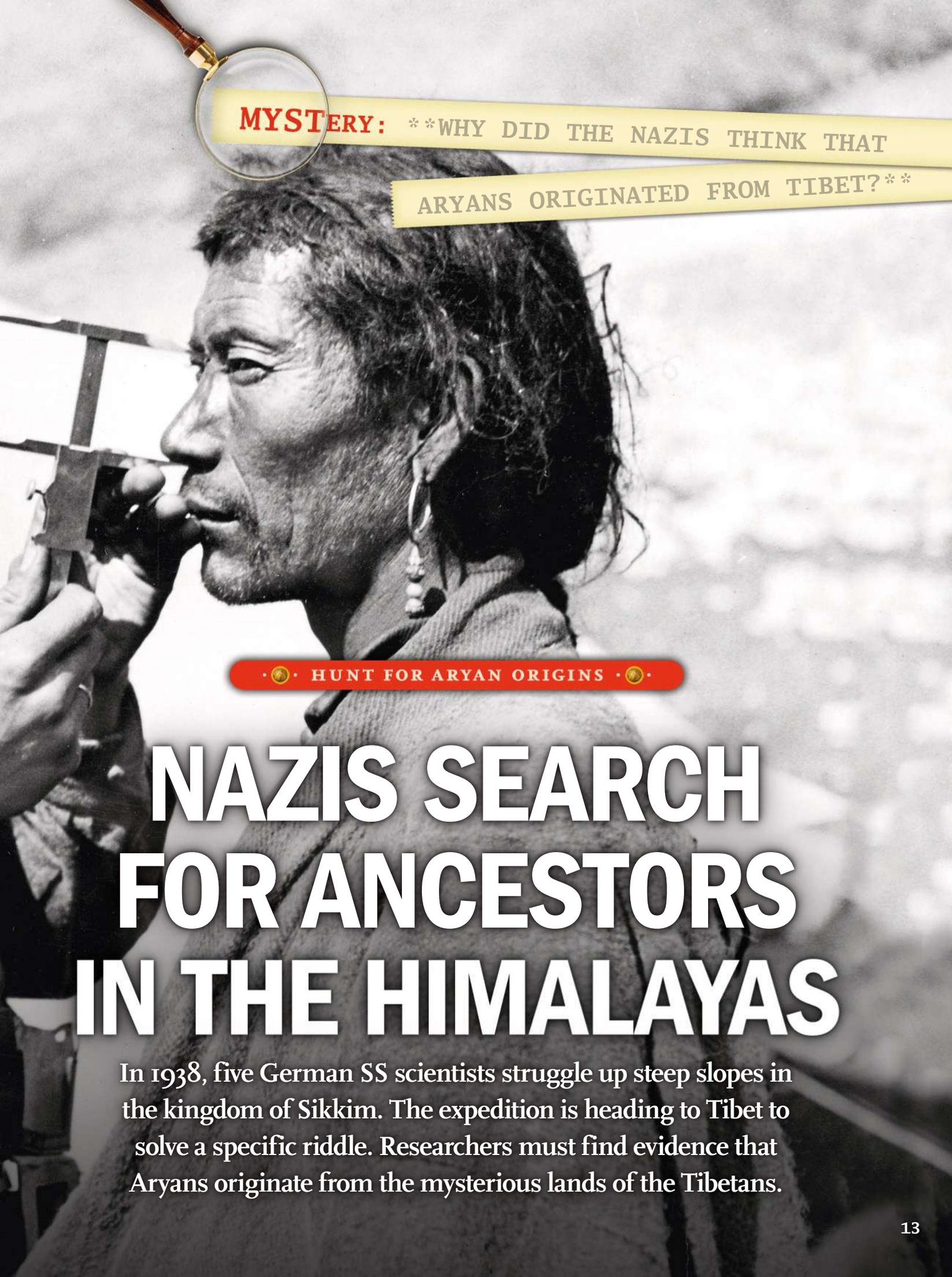
1945



The anthropologist Bruno Beger used callipers to measure Tibetan faces.

1938

22ND DECEMBER



HUNT FOR ARYAN ORIGINS

NAZIS SEARCH FOR ANCESTORS IN THE HIMALAYAS

In 1938, five German SS scientists struggle up steep slopes in the kingdom of Sikkim. The expedition is heading to Tibet to solve a specific riddle. Researchers must find evidence that Aryans originate from the mysterious lands of the Tibetans.

Tibet, 1938–39

THE STAGE IS SET



In the 1930s, interest in the Aryan race's origin is high among the Nazis. Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler is convinced that Aryans originated from Tibet and were educated by survivors from the legendary island of Atlantis. The Reichsführer sends an expedition to the Himalayas to prove his theory.

Five German scientists moved cautiously up a winding path on the way toward a high mountain pass on 22nd December, 1938. Behind them followed servants and carriers as well as a long caravan of yaks and ponies laden with equipment. Ahead lay the border crossing to the mysterious Tibet – an area the scientists had been waiting to enter for almost six months.

The Germans were Nazi officers from the dreaded elite SS corps, but dressed in parkas and sporting long beards looked nothing like typical close-shaved SS officers in black uniforms. For the highly qualified scientists, however, this was no ordinary SS task – the men had been tasked with solving a mystery for the corps chief, Heinrich Himmler.

Ancestral legacy, or Ahnenerbe, was the organisation that researched Aryans origin, culture and history, and published the magazine Germania from 1936.

Scientists had to prove Aryan descent

The expedition, led by zoologist and SS-Untersturmführer Ernst Schäfer, received Himmler's blessing to leave Germany bound for Tibet in the spring of 1938. The SS leader's main interest in the small group of five men that fought their way over the mountains was because he and many other Nazis were obsessed with finding the origins of the Aryan race. In 1935, Himmler had set up the Ahnenerbe, a special investigation unit primarily to research Aryan roots and history.

All Ahnenerbe scientists were members of the SS and were automatically officer rank in the corps, which by 1938 was made up of half a million specially bred and selected men. None of the SS had even the remotest traces of Jewish or other "inferior" races' blood.

Himmler's hope was that the scientists in Tibet could prove that the Aryan race originated from the Himalayas. From there, according to the theory, the Aryans later migrated west and into Europe.

According to myth, before the Exodus, the Aryans had been taught by the survivors from the sunken island kingdom of Atlantis. The so-called Atlanteans were superior to any other race and were believed to have invented both electricity and aeroplanes before Atlantis was flooded. Atlantean priests, who settled in the Himalayas, then passed on their wisdom and knowledge to the Aryans.

With limited medical training behind him Beger tried to treat the Tibetans.



The distance from the base of the nose to its tip would show if Tibetans were related to Germans.

Aryans were Egyptians' ancestors

In the late 1800s several German intellectuals had already discussed German racial superiority and the importance of finding out where the German people – the Aryans – originated. The most popular theory was that Aryans came from somewhere in Asia – either north India or Tibet – from where they migrated westward and conquered the world. Aryans had, according to theories, founded colonies in Egypt and laid the foundations for the kingdom of the pharaohs. From North Africa they would have headed on to Scandinavia but had mostly settled in Germany. If the theory held true, all Aryans were ancestors of the Indians, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, Italians, Slavs, Scandinavians, Anglo-Saxons – and especially Germans. Charles Darwin thought that the cradle of humanity probably lay in Africa; something German scientists could not take seriously.

No scientists had succeeded in proving these theories before the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933 – even aided by tens of thousands of German intellectuals. But when Hitler became Chancellor, supporters of these theories on

Aryans origin had complete backing. Many leading figures in the Nazi regime were vehemently interested in any project that could prove that the Aryans had a magnificent past. The Nazis were also incredibly absorbed by any evidence that other regions had once been inhabited by Aryans. Such proof would legitimise the desire for Lebensraum – German expansion in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Much therefore, depended on the results of the expedition to the Himalayas.



Characters inspired by runes were included in Ahnenerbe's emblems.

Britons hindered

In addition to Schäfer, the Tibet research group consisted of anthropologist Bruno Beger, entomologist and photographer Ernst Krause, geophysicist Karl Wienert and expedition technician Edmund Geer. From the mid-1930s, the team had been officers in the SS except for Krause. Just before elite corps' departure, however, the entomologist was given the rank of SS officer.

The expedition, which had been mostly funded through donations from the German business community, quickly encountered a problem after leaving Germany in April 1938, however. Travellers could only reach Tibet through India, which was under British colonial rule. But the British were not prepared to let the SS officers cross the border into Tibet.

Ever since the mid-1800s, the country had been completely closed to foreigners because both Tibet and its neighbours in China feared imperialist attack. The concern was not unfounded. In 1904 the British invaded the area and through trade agreements claimed an influence on the country, though Tibet was formally still independent. In the 1930s, Tibet became more open, yet British colonial rule in India still guarded a strict border between the countries. The British however, reluctantly allowed the Germans to camp in the small kingdom of Sikkim just south of the border with Tibet.

Permission was granted after pressure from Himmler, who took advantage of British hopes of avoiding a European war. And the SS boss was satisfied.

Failure was unthinkable

"My dear Schäfer, I am glad that the expedition is so well off and that it is a disciplined body bound together by comradeship... I very often think of you. Heil Hitler!" Himmler wrote to Schäfer, once the research group had reached Sikkim two months after leaving Germany.

British authorities had made it clear that the expedition was not to cross the border into Tibet under any circumstances. 28-year-old Schäfer would not settle for exploring Sikkim, but at that moment Tibet seemed like an unattainable goal.

Schäfer, who at the age of 20 had become famous in Germany for his exploration in China, knew he had to bring back something to the fatherland: failure was not an option. Anthropologist Bruno Beger spent his time waiting by taking various facial

1910-1992

NAME **ERNST SCHÄFER**

TITLE EXPEDITION LEADER

Zoologist was German folk hero

Ernst Schäfer was born in Cologne and studied zoology and geology at the University of Göttingen. At age 20 he participated in a US-led China expedition that made him famous throughout Germany. After Hitler took power in 1933, Schäfer attained officer rank in Heinrich Himmler's SS elite corps. The zoologist claimed after the war that he had joined the Corps reluctantly because membership was necessary for his professional career.

On his return from Tibet Schäfer had a reception in his honour and the following year was made director of the Institute for Central Asian Research, which belonged to the SS organisation Ahnenerbe.

He was interned as an Allied prisoner in Asia for several years after the war. After his release in 1949, Schäfer travelled to Venezuela, where he worked as a professor.

- **Was promoted to SS-Sturmbannführer.**
- **Was adviser to Leopold III after the war.**





Tibet's regent was fascinated by the Europeans' appearance, including Beger's blonde hair.

measurements and making masks of the local residents for later anthropological study. In Germany using his field studies, Beger would be able to classify head shape more accurately compared to other races. The face masks were made of plaster, which was applied in a thick layer over the face. Two straw pipes made sure that the "victim" could breathe while the plaster dried.

Schäfer received invitation

While the anthropologist worked, Schäfer wrote longingly in his diary:

"We are at Tibet's frontier. It is the realm of our most powerful yearning. Up there, not far away at all, is the border pass".

But the stranded expedition suddenly got help from an unexpected quarter. An envoy from one of Tibet's most influential men, Tering Raja, came past the Germans' small camp one day and the expedition leader was not slow in taking advantage of the opportunity. Schäfer persuaded the envoy that Tering Raja should invite the Germans to his estate in southern Tibet. Shortly after, Schäfer and photographer Krause were invited, and wearing a pith helmet with the SS runes, the Germans travelled across the border. The meeting was a success and Tering Raja promised to work on the Tibetan regent to secure an invite for the scientists to the country's holy city of Lhasa.

For several months the team went without any news from Tibet, but one day in December Schäfer finally received a letter from the ruler in Lhasa. The message was that the expedition was welcome in Tibet's holy city, but on the condition that the scientists did not harm the people and that they were only there for 14 days.

Germans fascinated ruler

Schäfer and his men wasted no time, and a few days later the expedition was heading over the mountain pass into the mysterious Tibet. The problem was that according to the letter, the Germans could only stay in Tibet as tourists and not as scientists. The ban would prevent them from carrying out the expedition's main task: scientific studies of the local population. The Germans had also hoped to get permission to visit the country's regent, who sat on the throne while the Tibetans awaited the formal recognition of their new Dalai Lama – the 14th – but when the Germans arrived in Lhasa in January 1939, the government suddenly had no time to meet the German expedition. The British, who manned a small mission in the city, had also made sure that the Germans would not receive a grand and warm welcome.

Schäfer was not put off by this opposition and took advantage of the fact that the British were not tremendously popular among Tibetans. The Germans became such good friends with some of the Tibetan nobility that the regent finally gave in and invited the scientists.

The meeting in the palace became the highlight of the expedition. The regent – a fragile-looking young man – was fascinated by the five representatives of the German people. In particular, Beger, but also Schäfer, captivated the young man. The Tibetan was photographed while he stroked his fingers through the German's dark beard.

The expedition's visit to Lhasa turned into a triumph, and the temporary stay of 14 days turned into months in the company of the city's most influential residents.

The scientists were given valuable gifts and took large amounts of priceless film, but they couldn't take the main measurements and make face masks for the anthropological race in Lhasa. The field work had to wait until the expedition was away from the city.

Although the visit to Lhasa was a success, things were about to go wrong for Schäfer as he crossed a Tibetan oracle who was giving his annual prophecy. The oracle was wandering in a trance along the street in Lhasa, followed by thousands of monks. Schäfer and cameraman Krause decided to follow and film the scene, but the monks suddenly turned angrily on the Germans. The Tibetans shouted and screamed and began throwing stones at the scientists and their bodyguards. Schäfer and Krause barely escaped the crowd after a violent brawl with the incensed monks.

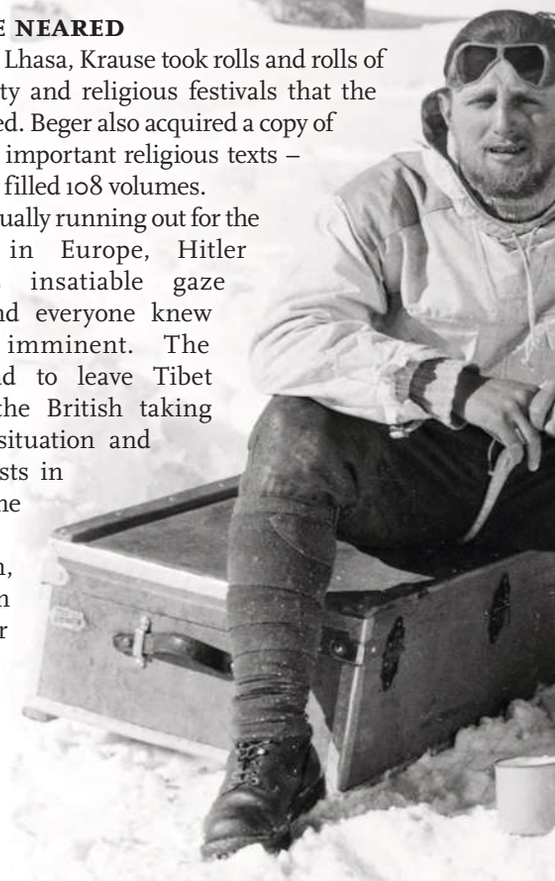
Daimler-Benz and BMW were among the companies that gave financial support to the Ahnenerbe. One of the biggest donations to the organisation was 50,000 Reichsmark.

War in Europe neared

During their stay in Lhasa, Krause took rolls and rolls of film of both the city and religious festivals that the expedition had visited. Beger also acquired a copy of one of Tibet's most important religious texts – the Kangyur, which filled 108 volumes.

But time was gradually running out for the Germans. Back in Europe, Hitler had turned his insatiable gaze toward Poland, and everyone knew that war was imminent. The SS expedition had to leave Tibet quickly to avoid the British taking advantage of the situation and locking the scientists in an Indian jail for the rest of the war.

On 20th March, 1939 the expedition left Lhasa after nearly three months in the city. The scientists did not



Germans travelled in closed country for five months

Few Europeans were permitted to visit Tibet, but after months of waiting Himmler's researchers were finally allowed to enter.

1 **In June 1938** the expedition arrived at Sikkim's capital, Gangtok, from where the researchers travelled further north.

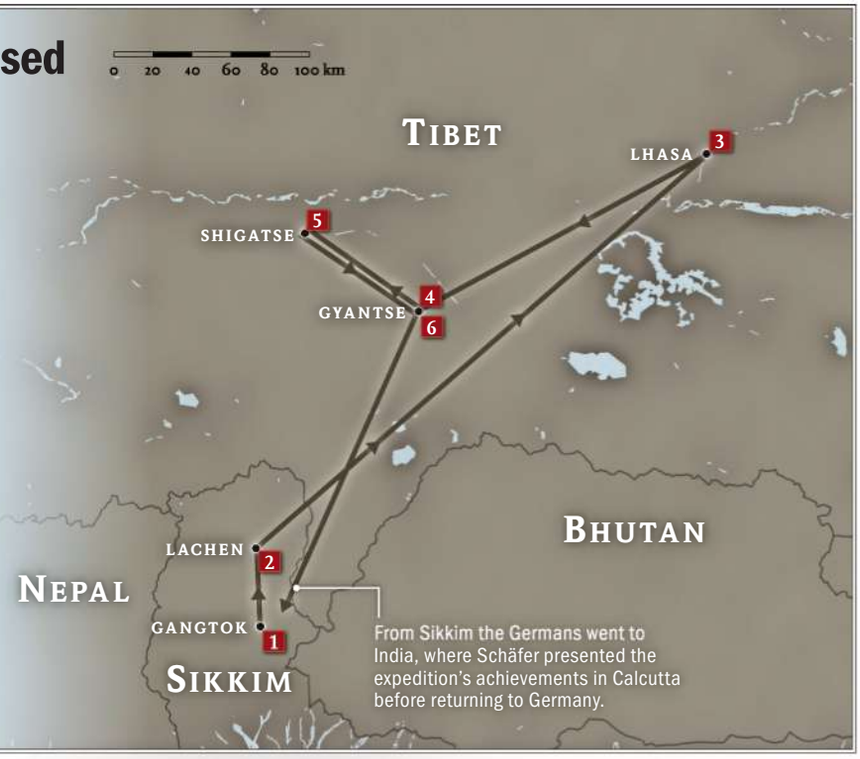
2 **20th December:** the Germans left northern Sikkim and headed towards Tibet.

3 **19th January, 1939:** Schäfer's team arrived at Tibet's capital, Lhasa.

4 **In March** the expedition left the capital and began the journey to the country. The scientists stopped in Gyantse.

5 **In April** the Germans arrived in the city of Shigatse, where the locals gave their the European guests an enthusiastic welcome.

6 **In May** the team travelled back to Gyantse before returning to Sikkim.



leave Tibet immediately, but made some stays and detours on the way out of the country.

Beger took facial measurements

During the journey out of Tibet, Beger managed to take hundreds of facial measurements and face masks of local Tibetans. After the field work in Tibet the scientists left and travelled to Europe via the Indian city of Calcutta.

On 4th August the expedition arrived by air in southern Germany and was welcomed by Himmler. The team continued quickly on to Berlin, where a huge reception was held in the scientists' honour. The expedition had returned to the motherland at the last minute as barely one



Snow, ice and cold met the scientists at Zemu Glacier in northern Sikkim close to Tibet.



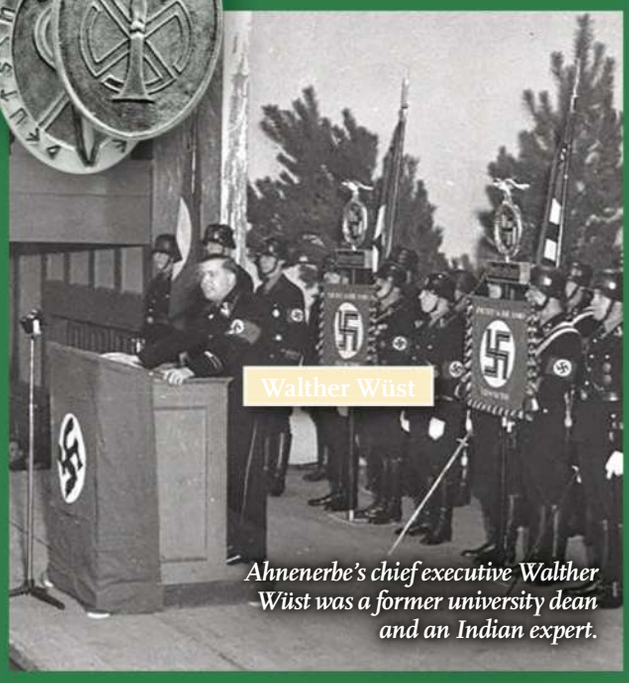
Irminsul Column – a symbol from pagan times – is embossed with one of Ahnenerbe's logos.

Experts hunted for German origins

German scientists from 51 disciplines travelled widely to uncover Aryans' past.

In 1935 Heinrich Himmler created the organisation Ahnenerbe, which researched theories on Germanic racial origin. The motto was: "A people lives happily in the present and the future so long as it is aware of its past and the greatness of its past and the greatness of its ancestors". Within a few years the organisation covered over 51 research areas such as folk music, archaeology, anthropology, scripture study and plant studies.

Both before and during the war Ahnenerbe sent expeditions to all corners of the world – from Iceland, Greece and North Africa to Iran and Tibet – in the hope of finding connections to the Aryan race. The organisation even tried to find the Holy Grail, as Himmler's belief was that it had been used to collect the blood of Christ while Jesus hung on the cross.



Walther Wüst

Ahnenerbe's chief executive Walther Wüst was a former university dean and an Indian expert.

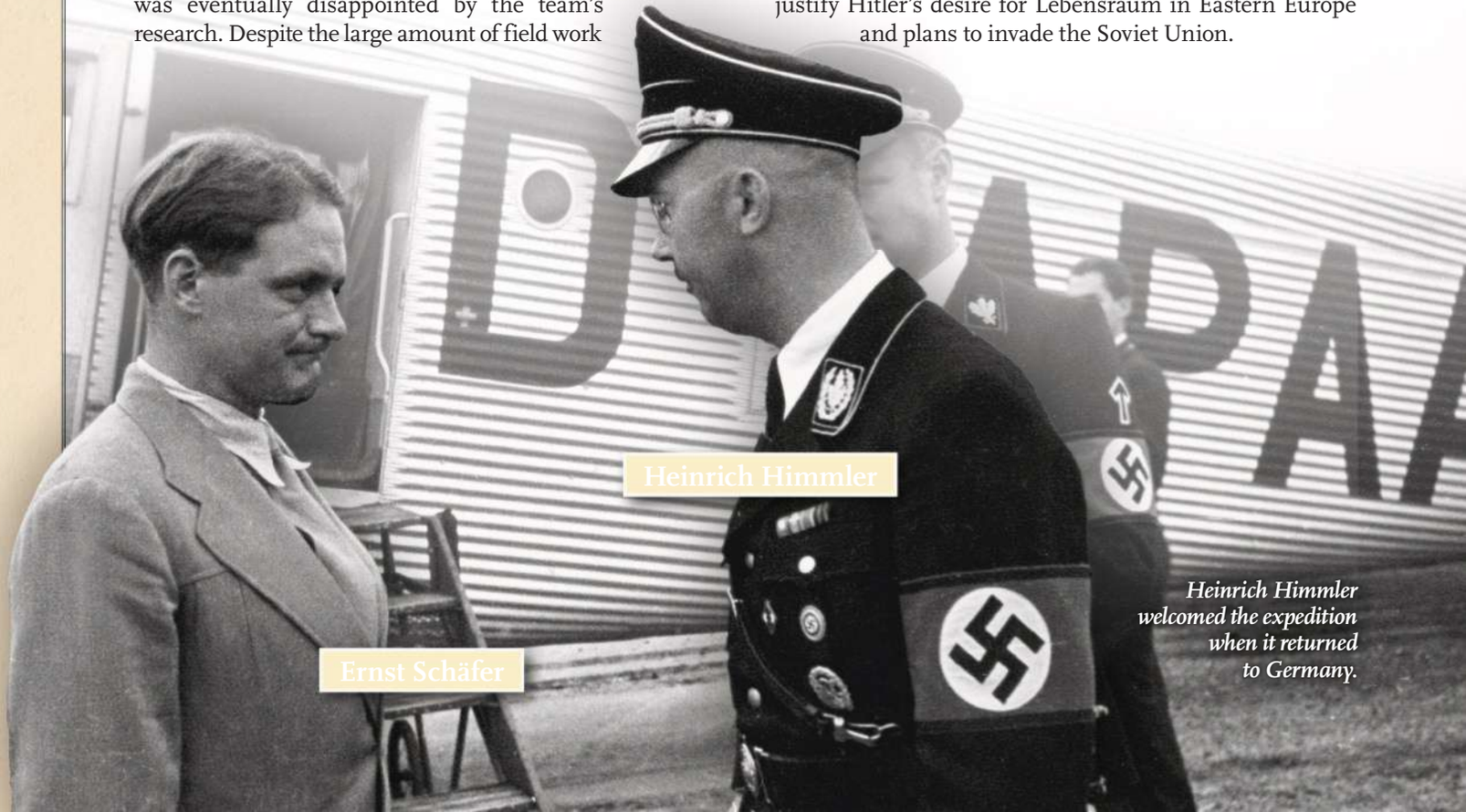
month after their arrival in Germany Hitler initiated WWII with the invasion of Poland. The yield from the Tibetan expedition was enormous. It brought home a total of 18,000 metres of film and 40,000 images. Beger had collected 2,000 ethnographic objects to document Tibetan culture, and also showcased 376 different measurements of Tibetan heads and various face masks and prints of ears, hands and fingers.

Himmler was extremely pleased with the expedition's results and gave an SS death's-head ring and SS ceremonial sword to Schäfer. But although Himmler showed his gratitude to the expedition leader initially, the SS commander was eventually disappointed by the team's research. Despite the large amount of field work and the amount of material they brought home, Schäfer and his colleagues never managed to prove the theory that the Aryan race originated in Tibet or India.

In the end, the scientists' data only proved that the Tibetan people – like virtually every other nationality – had been in contact with many other peoples over the years and therefore originated from many different types of people.

POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE MYSTERY

The Nazis formulated the theory that Aryans originated from the Himalayas and later spread to the west in order to justify Hitler's desire for Lebensraum in Eastern Europe and plans to invade the Soviet Union.



Heinrich Himmler

Ernst Schäfer

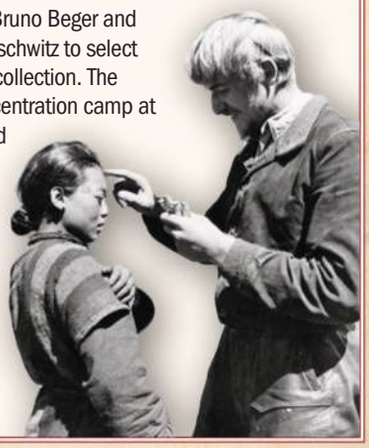
Heinrich Himmler welcomed the expedition when it returned to Germany.

Researchers collected skeletons

In 1943, the Nazis gassed 86 Jews, so their skeletons could become part of an anthropological collection. The bones would show that the Jewish race was inferior to the Aryan one. Bruno Beger, who had participated in the Tibet Expedition, helped select the Jews.

Anthropologist selected KZ prisoners for the gas chamber

In Spring 1943 anthropologists Bruno Beger and Hans Fleischhacker arrived at Auschwitz to select Jewish prisoners for the skeletal collection. The prisoners were taken to the concentration camp at Natzweiler-Struthof and murdered in a gas chamber over four days.
Aftermath: in 1970 Beger was sentenced to three years in prison for complicity in the 86 prisoners' deaths. Beger never served the sentence.



Bruno Beger's interest in race continued in Europe after the expedition to Tibet.

Expedition leader got the death penalty



Secretary General of the Ahnenerbe **Wolfram Sievers** had overall responsibility for the acquisition of the bodies for the collection. Sievers was also head of an institute for military research, which conducted medical experiments on humans.
Aftermath: Sievers was sentenced to death by doctors in Nuremberg prison in 1947 and was hanged in Landsberg.

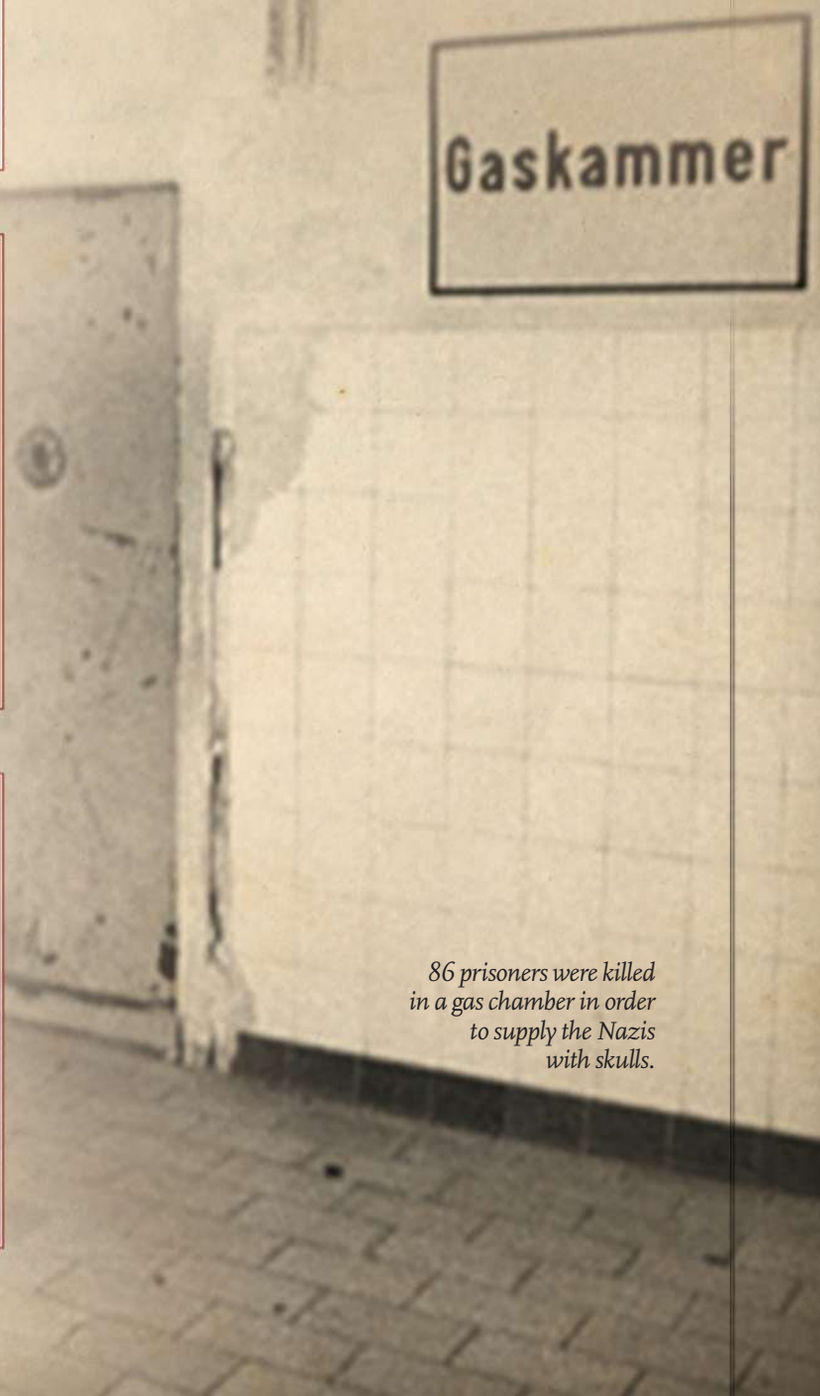
Wolfram Sievers was convicted of crimes against humanity and hanged in 1948.

Lawyer conveyed skull report

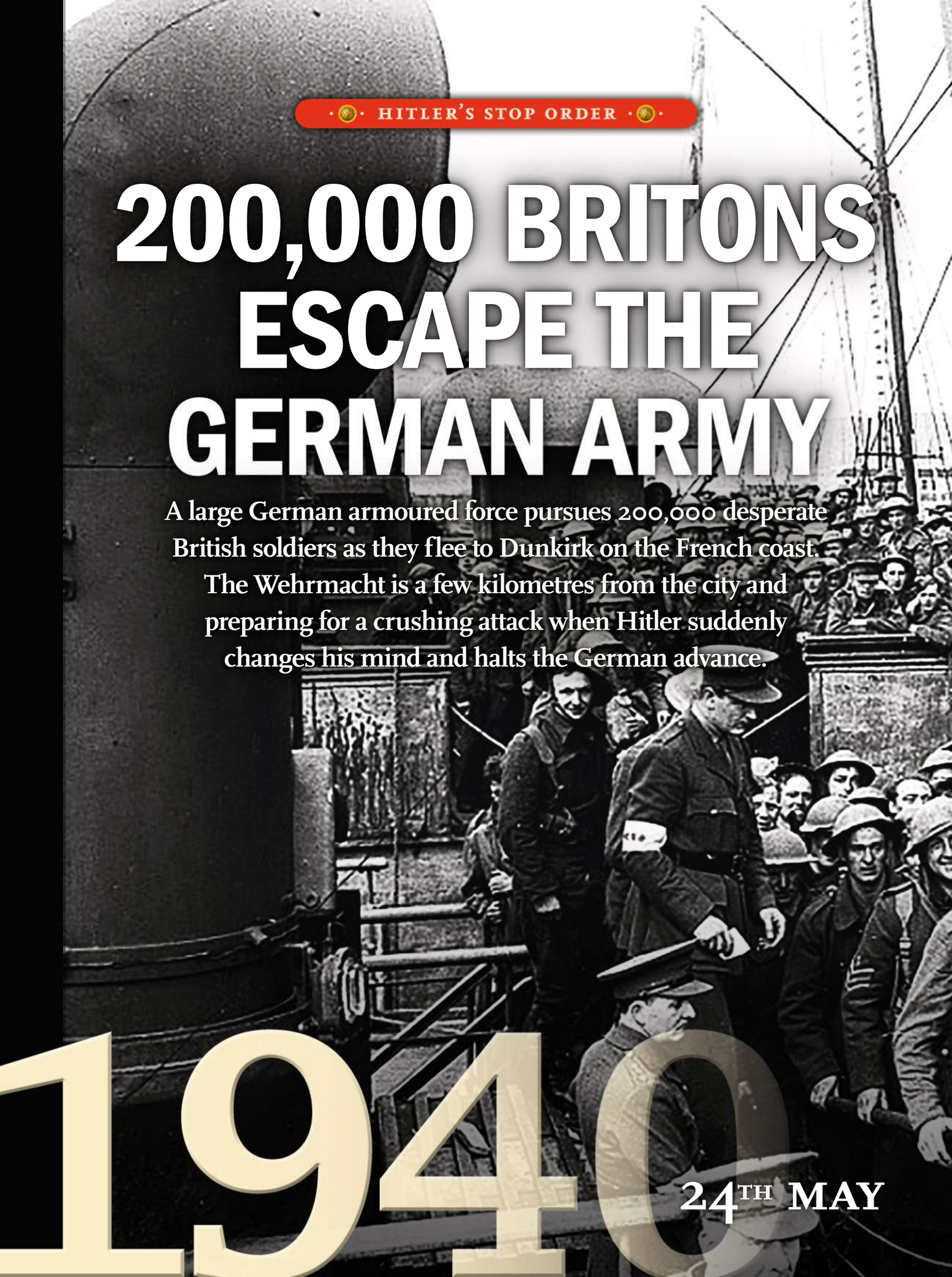
Lawyer **Rudolf Brandt** was a member of the Ahnenerbe and served as liaison officer between Heinrich Himmler and Ahnenerbe Secretary General Wolfram Sievers. In 1942, Brandt conveyed a report from the Secretary General to Himmler. Sievers announced that he didn't have enough Jewish skulls to build a complete skull collection.
Aftermath: Rudolf Brandt was hanged in 1948 after the Allies had judged him guilty of crimes against humanity.



As head of Heinrich Himmler's personal staff from 1936 to 1945, Rudolf Brandt was close to Nazi top brass.



86 prisoners were killed in a gas chamber in order to supply the Nazis with skulls.



HITLER'S STOP ORDER

200,000 BRITONS ESCAPE THE GERMAN ARMY

A large German armoured force pursues 200,000 desperate British soldiers as they flee to Dunkirk on the French coast. The Wehrmacht is a few kilometres from the city and preparing for a crushing attack when Hitler suddenly changes his mind and halts the German advance.

1940

24TH MAY



British troops disembarked at an English port after being evacuated from Dunkirk.

THE STAGE IS SET



In May 1940 the Nazi war machine attacks the Netherlands, Belgium and France, where the bulk of the British Army are. In 10 days German forces push the enemy up against the Channel coast, where the Allies then entrench themselves. If the Germans make a quick charge, Hitler could inflict a devastating defeat.

On the morning of 24th May 1940, General Heinz Guderian proudly surveyed his Panzer troops as they stood near the northern French coast. In just two weeks, the Germans had blasted through Northern France to the English Channel, driving 400,000 British, French and Belgian soldiers before them. The Allied forces were now surrounded outside the town of Dunkirk on the Channel coast, and Guderian was convinced that the Germans' superior Panzer Army would crush the enemy in a matter of days.

By noon on 24th May, the general's forward troops were ready to cross the Aa canal approximately 25 kilometres south of Dunkirk. It was the final water obstacle remaining between them and their target. The soldiers could taste victory when Guderian suddenly received a message from the hinterland.

"The Supreme Command intervened in the operations in progress, with results which were to have a disastrous influence on the whole future course of the war", a frustrated Guderian wrote later in his war memoirs. "Hitler ordered the left wing to stop on the Aa. It was forbidden to cross that stream". The general was completely stunned by Hitler's so-called Haltbefehl, (stop order), which ruined the possibility of adding a decisive British defeat to the war. Both Guderian and future historians have wondered why Hitler squandered such a unique and obvious opportunity.

Blitz War put Germans on the front foot

The Germans advantageous position on 24th May, 1940 had been set in motion several months earlier when Nazi strategists devised their offensive for the Western Front, codenamed Fall Gelb (Case Yellow). Hitler accepted General Erich von Manstein's bold plan to send the main German forces through the Ardennes in southeast Belgium and northern France. The army thereby avoided bloody battles along the strong Maginot Line in the east of France and instead surprised the enemy by crossing the Ardennes hills, which the French considered to be impassable for tanks.

On 10th May, 1940, the first German troops rumbled into the Benelux countries, and in line with the original defensive plan the French and British Expeditionary Force (BEF), focussed on the defence of central Belgium. But armoured units under Guderian were sent in through the Ardennes forests, where the enemy least expected it. French defences were weak in the area, and after just three days the XIXth

"I must talk to the Führer immediately; this is a special job for the Luftwaffe"

Hermann Göring when he heard about the encirclement of the Allies at Dunkirk

GERMANS STORM THROUGH WESTERN EUROPE

BLITZKRIEG CAMPAIGN



German armoured troops were awarded the Panzer Badge after participating in combat.

1940

24TH FEBRUARY
After six months of strategic meetings with German generals, Hitler decides on the Fall Gelb. The plan is for tanks to invade France by breaking through the Ardennes, then continuing to the English Channel. This enables the Germans to surround and cut off Allied troops that have moved into Belgium to block the German advance.

10TH MAY
German troops launch Fall Gelb by invading Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands.

11TH MAY
The first troops of the French 1st Army and British Expeditionary Force arrive in a defensive line along the Dyle river east of Brussels, where the Allies suspect that the Germans will try to penetrate. The defence must ensure that the enemy can't attack France from here. The Germans' main attack comes, however, from the south.



British soldiers wore a bar with the Expeditionary Force's initials.

12TH-13TH MAY
While British, French and Belgian forces are occupied at the Dyle, expecting a German strike, the Germans place their main attack in the Ardennes in southern Belgium. Following this Hitler's troops proceed to surround the Allied forces in central Belgium.

13TH MAY
German Panzer troops under General Heinz Guderian break through at Sedan, where the oldest French reserves with limited equipment are manning the lines.



The German armoured units' rapid advance through France made army general Heinz Guderian very popular among the troops who gave the commander various nicknames, including "Schneller Heinz" (Quick Heinz).

Panzer Corps took the town of Sedan and rumbled on towards the Channel. German armoured forces surrounded British, French and Belgian troops giving them problems in Belgium.

"We are defeated, we have lost the battle", said a crestfallen French Prime Minister, Paul Reynaud when he called Winston Churchill on the morning on 15th May.

Five days later, Guderian's Panzer division were closing in on the coast south of Dunkirk, and while the Germans proceeded towards the city, the Allies realised that defeat was close. British, French and Belgian soldiers headed back towards Dunkirk, which was the only means of escaping a bloodbath on the continent.

William Bullitt, US ambassador to Paris, closely followed the fighting's catastrophic developments and was in no doubt that the situation of the French and British troops was hopeless: "Unless God brings about a miracle... the army will be completely destroyed", the ambassador telegraphed home to Washington. The miracle came, but Bullitt had probably not anticipated that it would be delivered by Hitler.

German top officials balked at stop order

Hitler's stop order on 24th May came at a vital time for the Allies in Dunkirk. The order meant that exposed soldiers in the field could head back to Dunkirk before their escape route was cut off. Soldiers also had the opportunity to establish a defensive line around the port city ahead of Operation Dynamo, the plan for the British evacuation. From the western bank of the river Guderian impatiently followed the Allied retreat while trying to find any logical reason behind Hitler's stop order, which dictated

15TH MAY
German tanks defeat French armoured forces at the town of Philippeville. German divisions cross the River Meuse and the Germans' successful day is crowned when the Netherlands surrenders.

16TH MAY
Army Group A's commander, Gerd von Rundstedt, orders a temporary stop to the advance, but the orders are ignored by both Guderian and Rommel, who exploit their momentum to let the troops head west. On 23rd May, von Rundstedt issues another stop order.

17TH MAY
The Germans occupy Brussels, and the next day Antwerp also falls to German troops.



Fatigue was overwhelming when German armoured troops reached the Channel.

Wehrmacht encircle 400,000 soldiers

As German armoured forces invade Belgium and France in May 1940, about 400,000 Allied soldiers – of which 226,000 are British – flee to the west and finally stop in the port city of Dunkirk.



ENGLAND

DOVER

Front on 24th May, when Hitler issued the stop order.

The Allies in the area around Dunkirk-based defences.

DUNKIRK

CALAIS

THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

Aa-channel

YPRES

LENS

NOYELLES-SUR-MER

The Aa canal is the only watercourse for German troops to hurdle before Dunkirk.

FRANCE

0 10 20 30 40 50 km

3 German thrust adds pressure to the enemy

22nd May: once again the Germans press the Allied forces back across virtually the entire front around Dunkirk. German Panzer divisions surround the port city of Calais, which is still defended by French and British forces. The siege lasts four days before Allied soldiers surrender.

2 Troops reach the sea

20th May: Germans advance troops reach the English Channel at Noyelles-sur-Mer, which lies some 80 kilometres south of Dunkirk. Germany's southern and northern flank has thus closed in the French, British and Belgian forces. At the same time, however, the Germans are vulnerable to any attack by French forces that may emerge from the south.

PINCER MOVEMENT



1 **German troops** on the northern flank cross the border to Belgium on 10th May and continue towards Brussels.
2 **Armoured forces** on the southern flank move simultaneously through the Ardennes and invade France.
3 **Allied forces** in central Belgium are captured in the Germans' pincer movement.

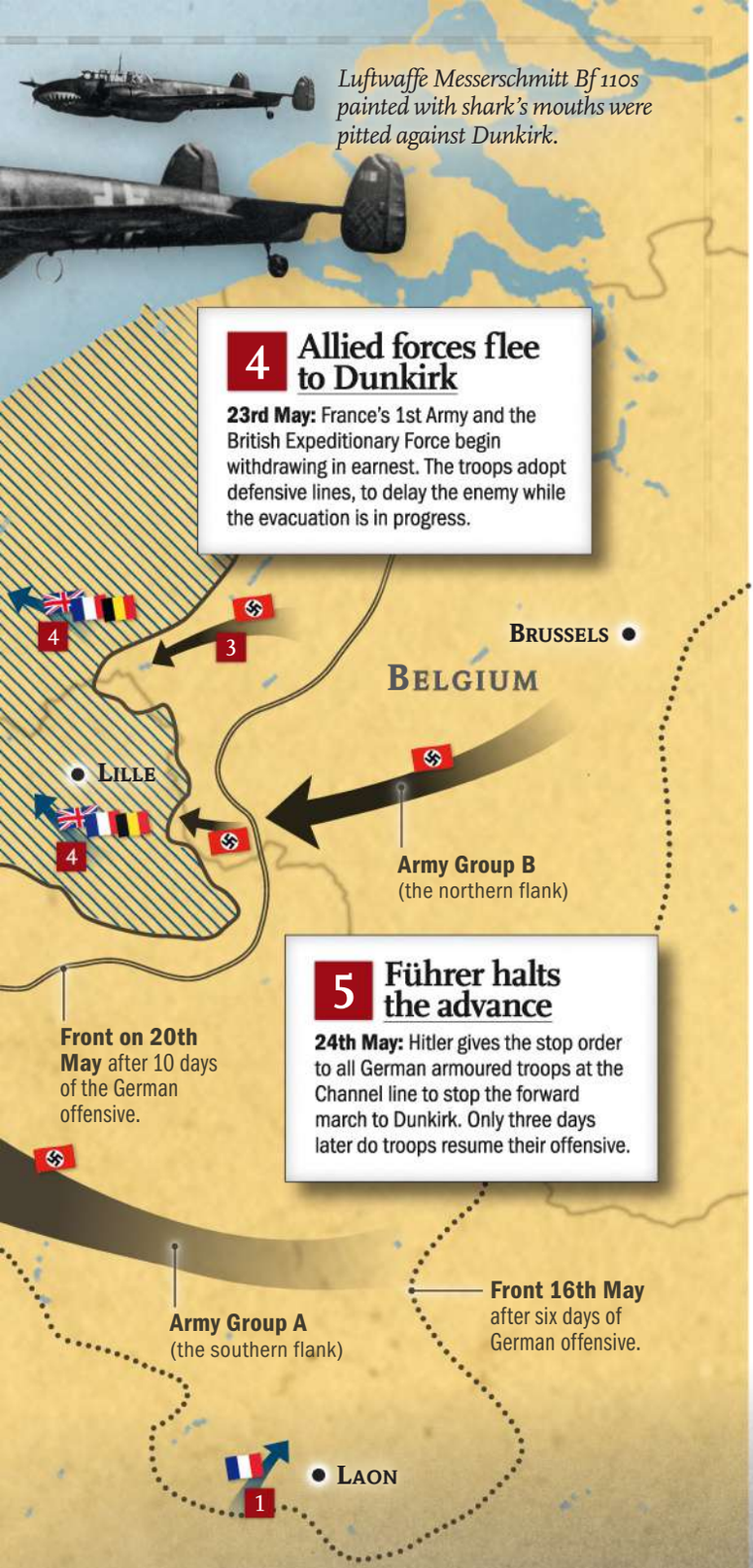
1 French General starts counterattack

17th-19th May: General Charles de Gaulle tries two desperate counterattacks near Laon to slow the German offensive. The general's attack has no effect on Hitler's foremost armoured troops.



The Ardennes woodland slopes did not stop hundreds of Germans tanks.

PARIS



Luftwaffe Messerschmitt Bf 110s painted with shark's mouths were pitted against Dunkirk.

that the river was not to be crossed. Later that day the stop order was followed by Führer Order number 13. The result of Hitler's two orders was that the Germans' southern flank – comprising Panzer divisions west and south-west of Dunkirk – should stop all advance, even though Guderian's troops stood less than 25 kilometres from the coastal town. The troops on the northern flank, who were more than 75 kilometres east and south-east of Dunkirk, had to continue the offensive against the city.

Guderian was not the only one to be shocked by the Führer's decision: "What is this nonsensical order to stop the Panzer formations south of Dunkirk supposed to mean? Do we want to build golden bridges for the English, whose entire expeditionary army is being squeezed in around Dunkirk? Do we want to give the English an opportunity to evacuate their troops? That is sheer nonsense", was the response of Army High Command's Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Heusinger from the Army High Command.

Both the Panzer general and Franz Halder, chief of the army general staff, believed that Hitler's order was marked by nervousness. But the Führer was probably not as nervous as head of Army Group A, Colonel General Gerd von Rundstedt, who may have given Hitler the idea for the stop order.

Hitler adopted von Rundstedt's tactics

On the morning of 24th May Hitler trooped up to Charleville, where von Rundstedt commanded Army Group A. The Führer had always been fond of the generalobersten and so listened closely as the commander presented his report. Von Rundstedt told him that the night before he had ordered the majority of the 4th Army – including the Panzer corps – to temporarily stop the advance. Some of von Rundstedt's troops,

German tanks and infantry created road blocks on the French and Belgian roads.

Top generals were deeply divided by the stop order

Army commanders at the front and foresighted officers in the general staff wanted to attack Dunkirk as soon as possible, but conservative officers in charge of Army Group A thought it made more sense to halt the offensive temporarily.









NAME AND TITLE	LOCATION	POSITION ON STOP ORDER	
GERD VON RUNDSTEDT (1875-1953) *Commander in Chief of Army Group A.*	• Charleville, North-eastern France	👍	Gerd von Rundstedt believed that the forces of Army Group B in the northern flank should be closer to Dunkirk before Army Group A continued toward the port city.
HERMANN GÖRING (1893-1946) *Head of the Luftwaffe.*	• One of the Luftwaffe headquarters	👍	Hermann Göring was convinced that the Luftwaffe could defeat the enemy in Dunkirk without the help of the army.
EWALD VON KLEIST (1881-1954) *Commander of Panzer Group.*	• Behind the front south-west of Dunkirk	👍	Ewald von Kleist claimed his Panzer divisions had lost half their tanks, and argued in favour of a break for the troops, so infantry could catch up. Von Kleist only wanted one day's break.
GÜNTHER VON KLUGE (1882-1944) *Head of the 4th Army, to which von Kleist's troops belonged.*	• Behind the front south-west of Dunkirk	👍	On the basis of Ewald von Kleist's information about losses in the German Panzer divisions Günther von Kluge recommended a break in the advance. Von Kluge wanted to see the offensive resumed by 25th May with an infantry assault.
FRANZ HALDER (1884-1972) *Chief of the Army General Staff.*	• Zossen in the east of Germany	👎	Franz Halder saw an end to the advance as an actual disaster and pressed repeatedly for Hitler to lift the stop order.
WALTHER VON BRAUCHITSCH (1881-1948) *Chief of Army Command.*	• Zossen in the east of Germany	👎	Walther von Brauchitsch met with Hitler twice to get the Führer to lift the stop order. He probably convinced Hitler to lift the order at the men's second meeting on 25th May.
FEDOR VON BOCK (1880-1945) *Commander in Chief of Army Group B.*	• Behind the front south-east of Dunkirk	👎	Fedor von Bock had trouble understanding why his forces should continue, while Army Group A had to stop. The source of von Bock's wonder was that Army Group A was much closer to Dunkirk than Army Group B.
HEINZ GUDERIAN (1888-1954) *Panzer General at the front south-west of Dunkirk.*	• The front at the Aa canal	👎	Heinz Guderian believed that armoured troops at the Aa should exploit the Germans' current momentum and continue to move rapidly to Dunkirk.

FACTS

THESES ON HITLER'S STOP

- **Tanks should be saved:** Hitler feared loss of armoured vehicles and wanted them saved for future attacks in the south.
- **Lack of belief in evacuation:** senior officers could not conceive that the British could launch an effective evacuation from Dunkirk.
- **Hermann Göring's promise:** the Luftwaffe chief promised Hitler that bombers and fighter planes could defeat the Allies at Dunkirk.



The British steel helmet, called a Brodie, was a slightly modified version of the original helmet from 1915.

continued forward, including forces under Guderian. Ewald von Kleist, who was head of a Panzer group on the southern flank, alleged that loss and damage to tanks had increased more than 50 percent over 14 days. Together with the commander of the 4th Army, Günther von Kluge, von Kleist therefore recommended to pause the advance for a day. The proposal made sense to von Rundstedt as it gave time for the infantry to catch up with the armoured divisions to reinforce the front.

Hitler's stop order, which was issued at 12.45, thus rubber-stamped von Rundtstedt's tactical moves. The Führer's order was more direct and clearly stated that forces along the Aa canal should stop completely.

After the war, von Rundstedt described the stop order as "a decisive mistake" and tried to place all responsibility on Hitler, but military historian Charles Messenger does not accept his explanation. Messenger and many other historians suggest that von Kleist, von Kluge and von Rundstedt were the real authors of the stop order. Von Rundstedt's part for the break in the offensive can be emphasised by the fact Hitler asked the generalobersten to determine when the stop order should be repealed. So, the army group chief was responsible for the fact the break continued over the next few days.

That said, the Führer never cited von Rundstedt as the source of the idea and at no time expressed any regret for the stop order. Since no minutes of the meeting between Hitler and the generalobersten exist, no one knows for sure how the two interacted. But there are indications that another top Nazi had a hand in the stop order too: Hitler's friend and Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring.

Göring promised success from the air

In the afternoon on 23rd May, the Luftwaffe chief received notice that Allied forces had reached Dunkirk, he hammered a heavy fist on the table and roared: "I must talk to the Führer immediately; this is a special job for the Luftwaffe. Get through on the phone!".

When Göring was connected to Hitler he proclaimed that "a huge victory for the Luftwaffe" lay ahead and that his planes alone could defeat the Allies at Dunkirk. Hitler could quietly halt the army and leave the final thrust to the Luftwaffe. Once its bombs had obliterated the area, the army could move in to "occupy the territory". The majority of historians doubt whether Göring's promise of victory was

"Unless God brings about a miracle... the army will be completely destroyed"

US ambassador in Paris, William Bullitt, in a telegram to Washington on Allied problems



General Erwin Rommel was at the forefront of the rapid and surprising armoured thrusts in 1940.

enough to persuade Hitler to stop the land troops' advance, but his friend's enthusiasm undoubtedly strengthened the Führer's conviction. Göring's phone call was enough for Hitler to initially hand the attack on Dunkirk to the Luftwaffe.

Both the army and Luftwaffe generals believed that Göring had overestimated the air force's abilities. Chief of Operations Alfred Jodl stated outright that Göring "could talk the hind leg off a donkey". And Luftwaffe field marshal General Wolfram von Richthofen believed – in direct contrast to his superior – that the attack ought to be a typical army mission that could deliver "a surprise attack on Dunkirk" as opposed to an operation for the air force.

Guderian also had difficulty understanding how German planes would take over the offensive; the Luftwaffe machines weren't in control of the airspace over the front, west of Dunkirk. Instead the Panzer general was forced to watch as British ships arrived in the area. An evacuation of Allied troops by sea was imminent.



A British soldier played the accordion as troops were evacuated.

"Hitler and above all Göring believed German air supremacy to be strong enough to prevent the evacuation of the British forces by sea. This belief was a mistake pregnant with consequence", Guderian noted. And it did not soften the blow when he later learned of another of Hitler's reasons to shout "stop".

Führer thought the ground too swampy

Hitler's own experiences of muddy trench warfare in World War I also influenced the stop order. The Führer later explained that "the unsuitable terrain around Dunkirk" prompted him to hold back armoured troops. Fellow WWI veteran General Wilhelm Keitel later recalled how the swampy terrain meant "the armoured units would have to keep to the roads", preventing them from being able to "deploy or display their real fighting power" should serious resistance be encountered. Guderian – one of Germany's foremost experts on tank warfare – thought he could better assess

France fell three weeks after Dunkirk

By 14th June German troops moved into Paris. 11 days later the rest of France capitulated, and was divided into two zones.

Following the offensive in Belgium and northern France, Hitler's armies rumbled south from Dunkirk. The Luftwaffe controlled the airspace and paved the way for German ground troops who stormed towards Paris. On 14th June the Germans captured the capital, and eight days later signed a ceasefire with the French. The agreement entered into force on 25th June and in fact meant that France surrendered. After it submitted, France was divided into two areas – a zone in the north and west under direct German occupation and a zone in the south, which was ruled by a French Government in collaboration with the Nazis. A small part of South-eastern France was also taken over by Italian forces.

> **"What is this nonsensical order… supposed to mean"**
>
> Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Heusinger about Hitler's stop order



Germans casualties ran to almost 140,000 dead and wounded in the attack on France.

conditions than Hitler and Keitel, who were not at the front. He knew the low-lying coastal terrain was not ideal, but the weather had been fine until 24th May, and his corps was still far superior to enemy units.

"The reason he [Hitler] subsequently gave for holding back my corps – that the ground in Flanders with its many ditches and canals was not suited to tanks – was a poor one", Guderian noted briefly in his war memoirs.

The terrain wasn't Hitler's sole concern – the Führer also feared that a rapid tank advance would leave a vulnerable gap between them and the advancing infantry, allowing the Allies to potentially encircle the tanks with a flank attack.

On 24th May, Hitler stated that "it is necessary... to conserve the armoured forces for future operations".

Forces should be ready for next attack

That day, the Führer was in a meeting with von Rundstedt when he received news that more than half of von Kleist's armoured vehicles had been sidelined. The assessment may have convinced Hitler that it was a good idea to stop the advance while the tanks were repaired, and the crews rested before continuing the offensive against the rest of France.

According to historian Brian Bond the stop order was also due to the fact that "the German leaders simply could not believe that a large-scale evacuation from Dunkirk was possible". Therefore, any advance on the port city didn't need hurrying along.

Perhaps, in addition, the Führer hoped the stop order would be perceived as a gesture that could pave the way for peace with Britain. In his political memoirs Hitler wrote that he intentionally spared the British at Dunkirk in any case, but Churchill did not appreciate the German's gesture. Almost no historians accept this explanation.

Regardless of the reasons, the bizarre stop order proved to be disastrous. Allied troops were given the opportunity to retreat and form a strong defensive line around Dunkirk and the Luftwaffe proved incapable of breaking its opponent.

Gradually commanders realised their mistake, and even von Kleist pushed for permission to send armoured troops to Dunkirk. Von Rundstedt put forward his proposal after inspecting the front and informed the Führer.

On 26th May Hitler's stop order was repealed, and the next day, German forces launched an offensive along the Channel line. "By then it was too late to achieve a great victory", explained Guderian.

Stop order saved Allies

Well-prepared Allied defences and rain hampered the Panzer troops' advance toward Dunkirk. At the same time, low-lying clouds weakened the Luftwaffe effort. If Hitler had launched the offensive on 24th May, military experts determined, the Germans would have conquered Dunkirk within two days and cut off troops from evacuation by sea. Instead, a total of 338,226 British, French and Belgian soldiers were saved from being surrounded in the city.

POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE MYSTERY

The reason for the stop order is probably that Hitler wanted to spare Wehrmacht tanks, and he believed that the Allies could not carry out a comprehensive evacuation.

Evacuation revived Britain's courage

The rescue of nearly 200,000 soldiers lifted British fighting spirit and ensured army troops could continue the fight against Nazi Germany.

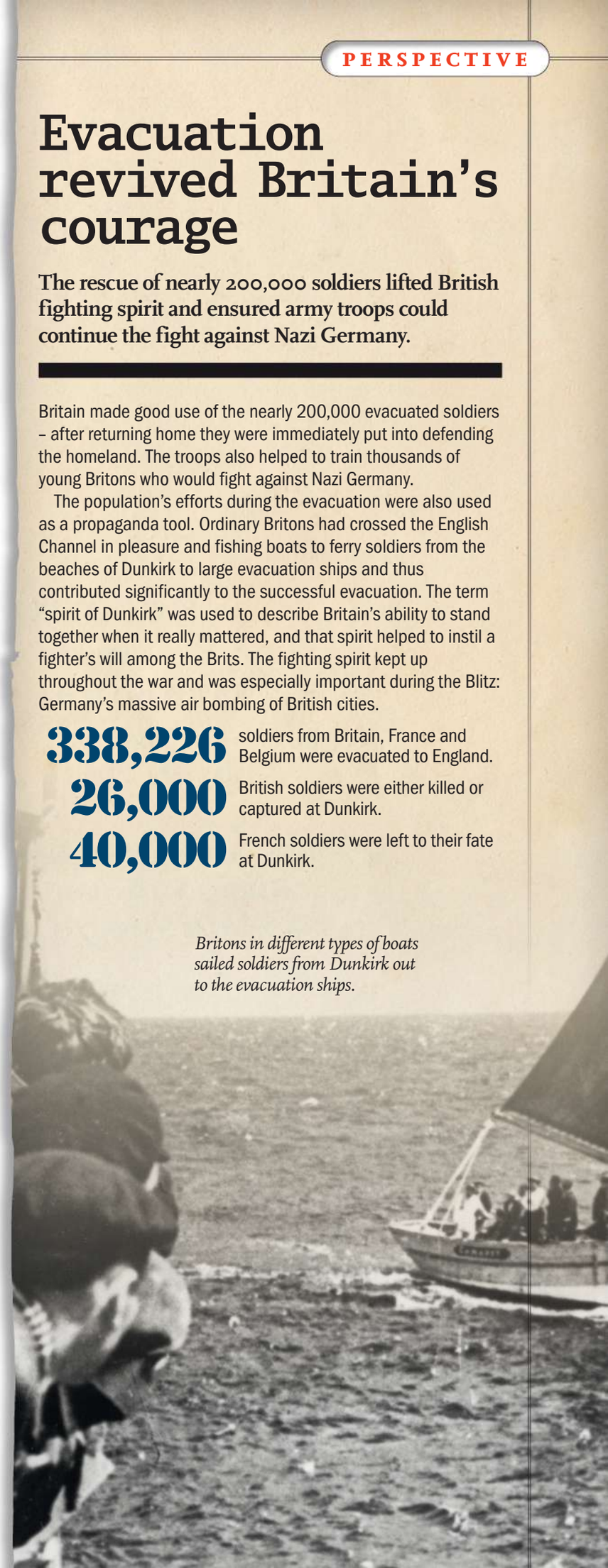
Britain made good use of the nearly 200,000 evacuated soldiers – after returning home they were immediately put into defending the homeland. The troops also helped to train thousands of young Britons who would fight against Nazi Germany.

The population's efforts during the evacuation were also used as a propaganda tool. Ordinary Britons had crossed the English Channel in pleasure and fishing boats to ferry soldiers from the beaches of Dunkirk to large evacuation ships and thus contributed significantly to the successful evacuation. The term "spirit of Dunkirk" was used to describe Britain's ability to stand together when it really mattered, and that spirit helped to instil a fighter's will among the Brits. The fighting spirit kept up throughout the war and was especially important during the Blitz: Germany's massive air bombing of British cities.

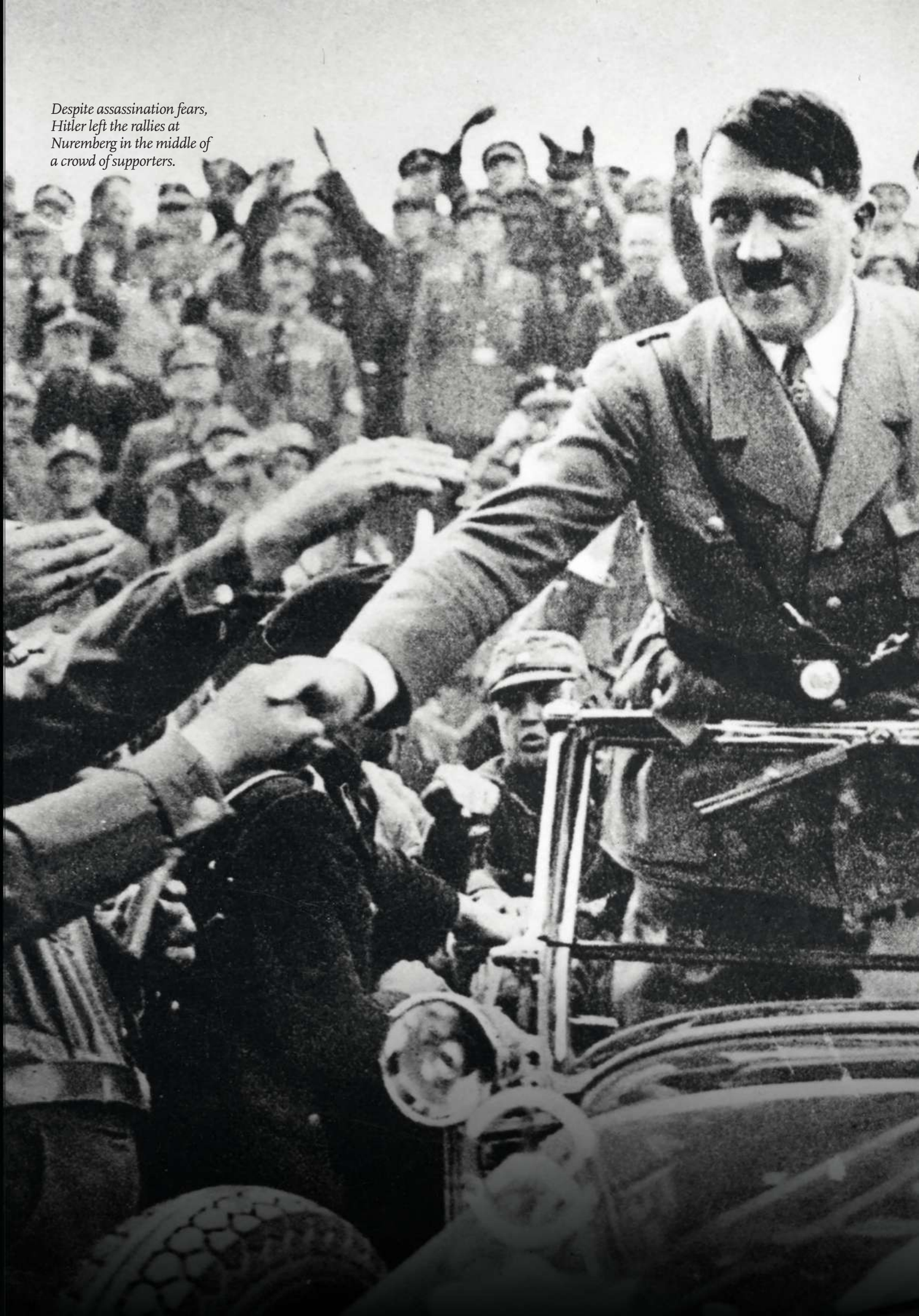
338,226 soldiers from Britain, France and Belgium were evacuated to England.

26,000 British soldiers were either killed or captured at Dunkirk.

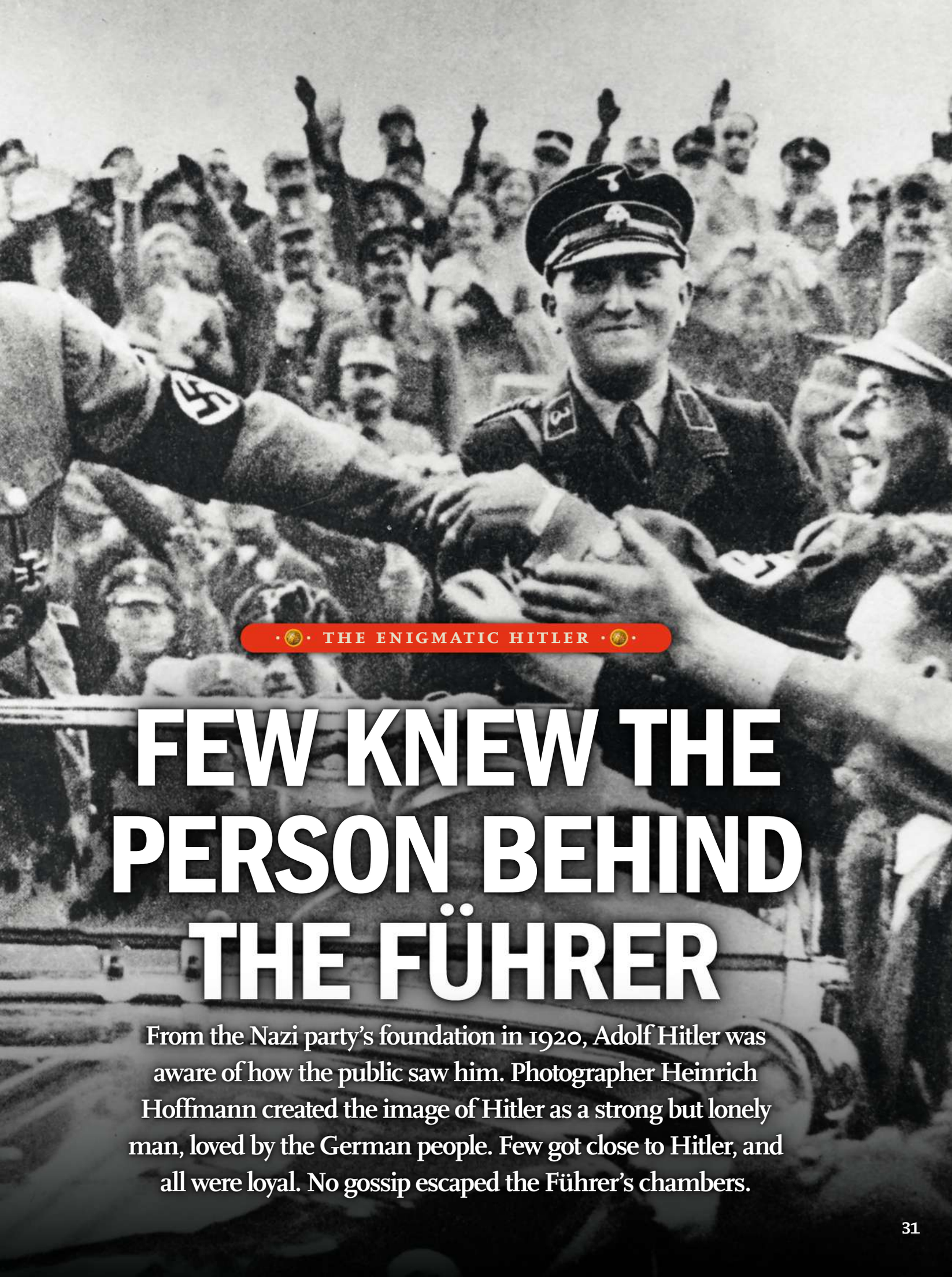
40,000 French soldiers were left to their fate at Dunkirk.



Britons in different types of boats sailed soldiers from Dunkirk out to the evacuation ships.



Despite assassination fears, Hitler left the rallies at Nuremberg in the middle of a crowd of supporters.



FEW KNEW THE PERSON BEHIND THE FÜHRER

From the Nazi party's foundation in 1920, Adolf Hitler was aware of how the public saw him. Photographer Heinrich Hoffmann created the image of Hitler as a strong but lonely man, loved by the German people. Few got close to Hitler, and all were loyal. No gossip escaped the Führer's chambers.

MYSTERY: **WHY DID HITLER HATE JEWS?**

The Jewish race in Europe *would be eradicated if international Jewish financiers both inside and outside Europe succeeded in plunging the nations into another world war, Adolf Hitler roared from his rostrum in the German parliament on 30th January, 1939.*



In Mein Kampf Hitler spoke about his political awakening, *and how he would transform Germany into a pure-bred empire.*

JEW HATRED

Defeat led to the Holocaust

Hitler was convinced that only a pure Germany built on conservative German values could regain its former glory. Historians believe his belief was rooted in Germany's defeat in World War I, the revolution in the war's final year that overthrew the monarchy, and the crisis of the 1920s that led to unemployment and hunger. Hitler believed these disasters were due to a conspiracy by Bolsheviks and Jewish financiers. Large popular nationalist movements emerged in the interwar period when the Weimar Republic struggled to solve Germany's problems. After his release in 1925, Hitler seized the opportunity and pulled together the various nationalist movements into the Nazi party.



The Eternal Jew *was an exhibition in 1937 that toured in German libraries. The exhibition portrayed Jews as a race of fences in collusion with world communism.*



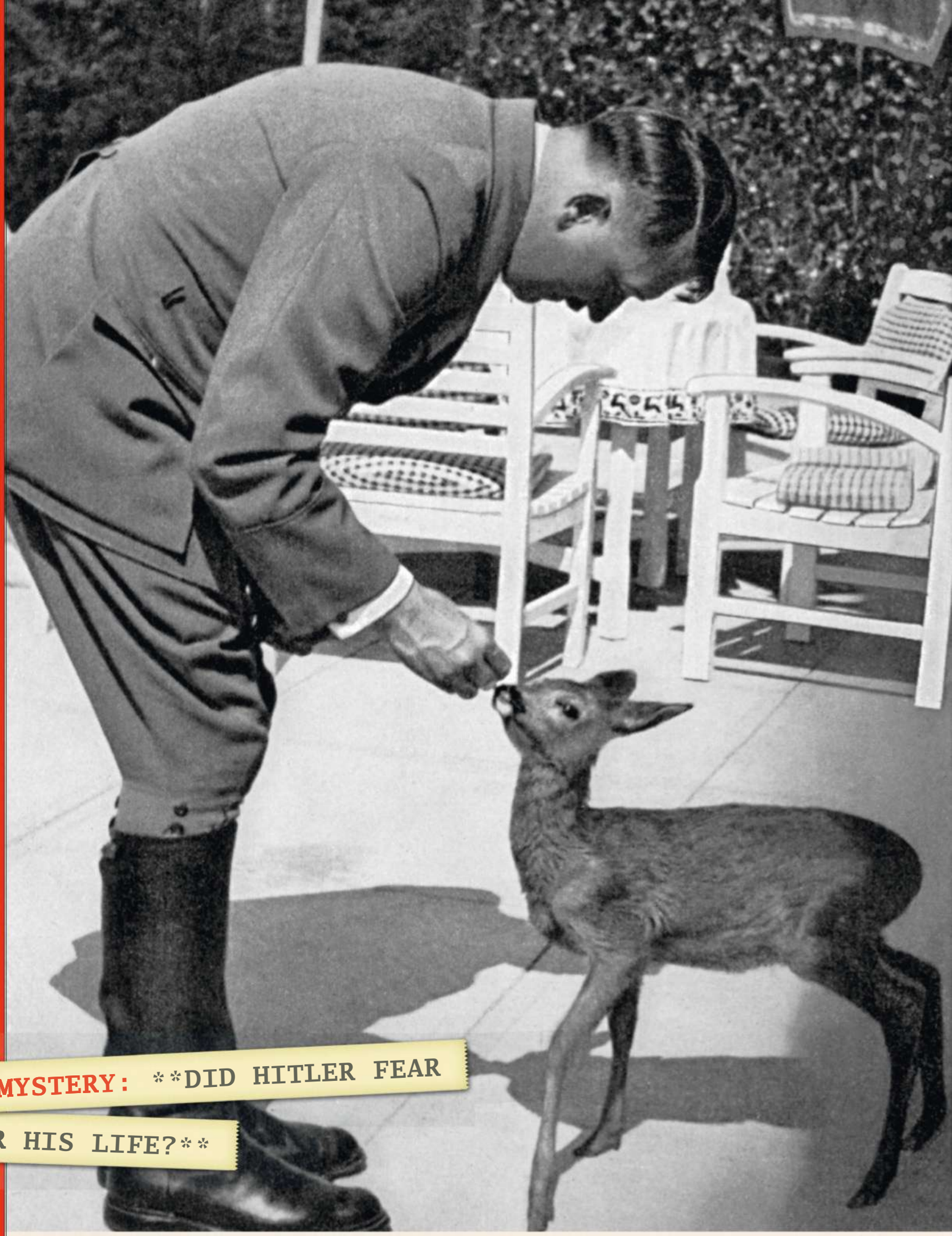
From 1941, *the yellow star was worn by Jews in Germany and German-occupied territories.*



The campaign against German Jews *began after Hitler seized power in 1933 with the boycott of Jewish shops and mass layoffs of, for example, Jewish doctors, teachers and civil servants.*



Hitler saw the revolution in Munich in 1918-19 *at close quarters, and he was convinced that a group of Jewish intellectuals played a leading role. Hitler also believed that the revolt led to Germany being humiliated by the peace agreement following World War I.*

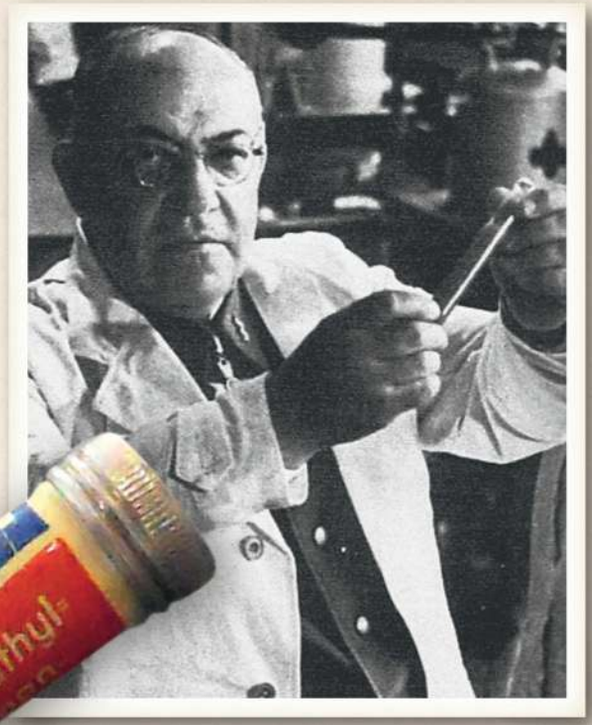


MYSTERY: **DID HITLER FEAR FOR HIS LIFE?**

The Führer feeding a faun on the terrace *is one of the subjects of a series of trading cards that Germans found in cigarette packs in 1933. Whenever Hitler posed for publicity photos or for Eva Braun's album, he wore a jacket because he was never without a bulletproof vest.*



Hitler feared being poisoned *and all dishes on the Führer's table were checked before serving by one of many female tasters.*



Strychnine, morphine and amphetamine *were among at least 28 different medications that doctor Theodor Morell treated Hitler with during the period 1936-45.*



The drug methamphetamine, *sold as Pervitin, was also used by the German Army.*

PARANOIA

Attempt on his life

After taking power in 1933, Hitler lived in constant fear of assassination. He received many death threats, and more than 40 assassination attempts were foiled. Hitler was constantly surrounded by bodyguards, always wore a bulletproof vest and ate nothing without the food being tasted first by one of 15 women who were recruited as tasters. Fear of death affected the Führer's health; he suffered from recurring abdominal pain and feared dying from a serious disease. Dr Morell was always around Hitler, and by 1945 Hitler was up to taking 28 different pills a day.



The bulletproof vest *visible under Hitler's shirt in 1925 is tucked into a pair of Bavarian Lederhosen.*



Hitler relaxing with newspaper *in Landsberg prison in the summer of 1924 – the picture is one of the last of Hitler in shirt sleeves.*



Eva Braun was Hitler's secret companion *from 1929 to 1945. She lived with Hitler at the Berghof, but the couple only married in 1945, 36 hours before their joint suicide. Braun's existence was unknown to the German public, who always thought of the Führer as living alone.*

FAMILY

Führer was man of the people

Hitler lived in a committed relationship with Eva Braun, but the couple were married just hours before their suicide, they had no children and never appeared in public together. Officially, Hitler was single and exclusively dedicated to serve the German people. Before Eva Braun, Hitler had a series of short affairs, including one with his niece Geli, who allegedly committed suicide when the Führer broke up with her for Eva Braun. Hitler supported his half-sister Angela financially, but after the outbreak of war in 1939 he only saw her occasionally.



Fan mail poured in *to the Führer at the Reich Chancellery, including letters from infatuated women.*

Blotter *for Hitler's 50th birthday on 20th April, 1939.*



Hitler's niece Geli committed suicide *in 1931, allegedly after the end of an affair with Uncle Adolf.*



William was the son of Hitler's *half-brother Alois and his Irish wife Bridget. At the outbreak of war in 1939 William was stranded in the US. In 1944 he enlisted in the US Navy.*



Hitler cultivated the ideal of the German nuclear family, *and in the absence of his own family was often seen with his propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, his wife Magda and their six children. The Goebbels family committed suicide in Hitler's bunker in Berlin in April 1945.*



MISSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

KZ PRISONER SPIES FOR THE NAZIS

Dachau concentration camp prisoner number 26,336 gets an offer: either you die in Dachau's torture hell, or you can spy for Germany. After months of training Paul Fackenheim stands with a parachute on his back and looks down into the darkness – 2,000 metres above British-controlled Mandatory Palestine.

1941 APRIL



The former KZ-camp prisoner parachuted into Haifa furnished with false papers.

MYSTERY: **WHY DID THE NAZIS MAKE USE OF A JEW AS A SPY?

Palestine, 1941

THE STAGE IS SET



Field Marshal Erwin Rommel arrives in Libya in February 1941 to command the Afrika Korps. Rommel advances quickly, but Nazi ambition is to expel the British completely from the Middle East to get its hands on Arab oil. The Germans need intelligence on Palestine from all possible sources – even Jewish ones.

Oberscharführer Beck refused to catch the eye of prisoner number 26,336 as he filed past. But as the day's tasks were distributed, the rows of prisoners thinned out to leave Paul Fackenheim standing alone in the square. He sweated nervously in his striped prison uniform as his heart beat rapidly. What was happening? Had they forgotten him? His mind quickly dismissed the thought. Simple forgetfulness didn't exist within the Nazi machinery, and then a crackling voice sounded from the loudspeaker:

"Number Two Six Three Three Six to the hospital. Schnell!" The hospital? Why, Fackenheim thought, before running uncertainly towards the hospital building.

At the hospital, the staff unexpectedly asked after his health, and three nurses cleaned Fackenheim's wounds with cotton swabs and alcohol. Finally, a doctor declared the prisoner should no longer work in the camp, but receive ample food and drink. Fackenheim was almost in shock as he adjusted to his new life. He could see the black smoke from the crematoriums from his bed, and at times the silence in the hospital was shattered by the sound of gunshots outside. Hell continued for thousands of prisoners in Dachau, but Fackenheim had apparently been singled out for a different fate. There was a whole week of treatment, good food and sleep before Fackenheim again heard his number over the speaker system. This time he was dispatched to the Gestapo barracks where two men in civilian clothes welcomed him from behind a desk.

"Would you please sit down, Herr Fackenheim," asked one in a mild voice.

The Jew couldn't remember the last time he had been addressed as "Herr" and sat confused on the chair.

"My colleague and I, we have come here to ask you a question. Would you like to get out of here? We know quite a few things



The road to freedom meant obedience, diligence and love for the fatherland, according to the sign.

about you. During the First World War you have distinguished yourself in battle. You've fought bravely for your country".

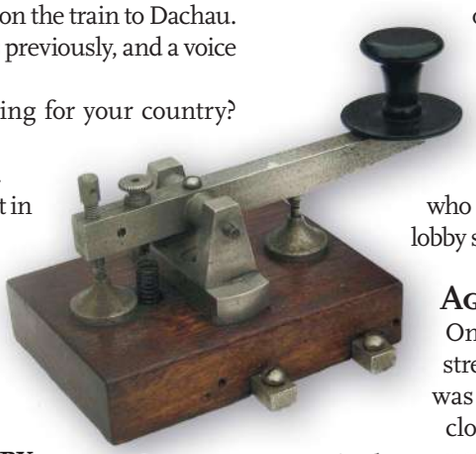
That was certainly true, thought Fackenheim. During World War I, he'd enlisted in the 63rd Field Artillery regiment and had fought in France. When an important phone line was blown to pieces, he'd volunteered and repaired the connection under heavy French fire. At that time, no one had cared he was Jewish and later he'd been awarded the Iron Cross. When Jews began to be persecuted in Germany, Fackenheim had continued to wear the Iron Cross in defiance. The medal on his chest had counted for nothing, however, when two Gestapo knocked on his door one night and put Fackenheim on the train to Dachau.

The event had occurred nine months previously, and a voice brought the Jew back to reality.

"Would you be ready to do something for your country? And be free?"

"Of course I'd like to get out of here".

A few hours later, Paul Fackenheim sat in a grey Mercedes-Benz in the clothes he'd worn when arrested. The Iron Cross was again on his chest as behind him Dachau's barbed wire and towers disappeared. The sky was bright blue, and the air was full of spring.



Secret agents transmitted messages to headquarters using Morse code.

Mission shrouded in mystery

Fackenheim's journey ended in the Belgian capital Brussels, where he was put up in a discreet guesthouse. All his expenses had been paid in advance and he was handed a new identity card where his surname Fackenheim had been replaced by Koch.

The 48-year-old Fackenheim still had no idea what his job would be, but the Abwehr – the German military intelligence service – already had the squeeze on him. At the time of his release, he'd promised to cooperate if the military in turn protected his mother Hedda, who lived alone in Frankfurt. Fackenheim's fear was his mother's Jewish roots would also see her dispatched to a concentration camp. The Abwehr agreed and shortly afterwards an anonymous man knocked on Hedda's door with the first of many envelopes containing 300 marks.

Now they held sway over his mother, the Abwehr could finally start training the former concentration camp prisoner.

"Let's start working. Do you have any experience in Morse?" said Hans Müller, a powerful and good-looking gentleman in civilian clothes, after entering the guesthouse one morning.

Müller became Fackenheim's teacher for several weeks, and Fackenheim asked him again and again what the task was. But Müller revealed nothing. Fackenheim gradually surmised that the mission must be about espionage, but he had no idea where. The days ran swiftly, but at night he was deeply concerned. He continued to have nightmares about his stay in Dachau and felt guilty about being freed while his fellow Jews were still trapped. Do I know I'll be helping the country of my birth, he wondered, or will I be assisting the Nazis in getting rid of the Jews?

At the same time Fackenheim had doubts over why he'd been selected. During World War I, he'd developed a friendship with a jovial pilot named Hermann Göring. Could that be the reason? Fackenheim got no answer. Instead he moved discretely on. First to Berlin, where he spent a few weeks, and then on to German-occupied Athens. His plane landed in the dusty Greek capital at the same time Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa – the invasion of the Soviet Union – and everywhere armed forces were on high alert. At the airport he met a young officer who drove him to the Hotel Majestic, where the lobby swarmed with German soldiers.

Agents set up trap

One day, as Fackenheim wandered around the streets of Athens to kill time as he often did, he was stopped by two Germans in civilian clothing asking for directions. Since he had nothing better to do, Fackenheim accompanied them. The men invited him to a bar and when all three were drunk, the Germans began to question what he was doing in Athens. The questions became increasingly intrusive, and Fackenheim's answers increasingly clumsy. Eventually he got up and left. Next morning, Müller stormed into his room:

"Tell me, Koch, have you lost your mind?"

A furious Müller explained that Fackenheim's drinking companions were agents who'd reported him. The agents didn't think Fackenheim could keep his mouth shut. As a result, he'd been close to being shipped back to Dachau.

Müller seemed nervous, and the next day transferred Fackenheim to a new hotel. Here, he finally received a detailed message about his mission. In the summer of 1941, Germans were advancing on all fronts – including North Africa where Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's next target was the strategically critical Suez Canal. But success required knowledge of British positions in the area, which is where Fackenheim came in. He would be required to spy on the British and Jews in Palestine. The country was a British mandated area and had become a refuge for thousands of Jews fleeing Nazi Germany.

"No, anything but that!" was Fackenheim's sharp response. "I shall do nothing that could harm any other Jew".

Müller was silent for a moment before continuing: "I can promise you and assure you that we shall refrain



"I shall do nothing [to] harm any other Jew"

Paul Fackenheim on being told he would be spying in Palestine

NAZI SPY

JEW WAS QUESTIONABLE SECRET AGENT

1940

Paul Fackenheim is interned in the concentration camp at Dachau for being Jewish.

1941

APRIL
Fackenheim is offered an escape from Dachau by working for Nazi Germany.

MAY
The former prisoner starts to learn spy craft in occupied Brussels. Training includes Morse code and parachuting.

BEGINNING OF JUNE
Fackenheim is flown to Berlin, where he spends several weeks without knowing his purpose.

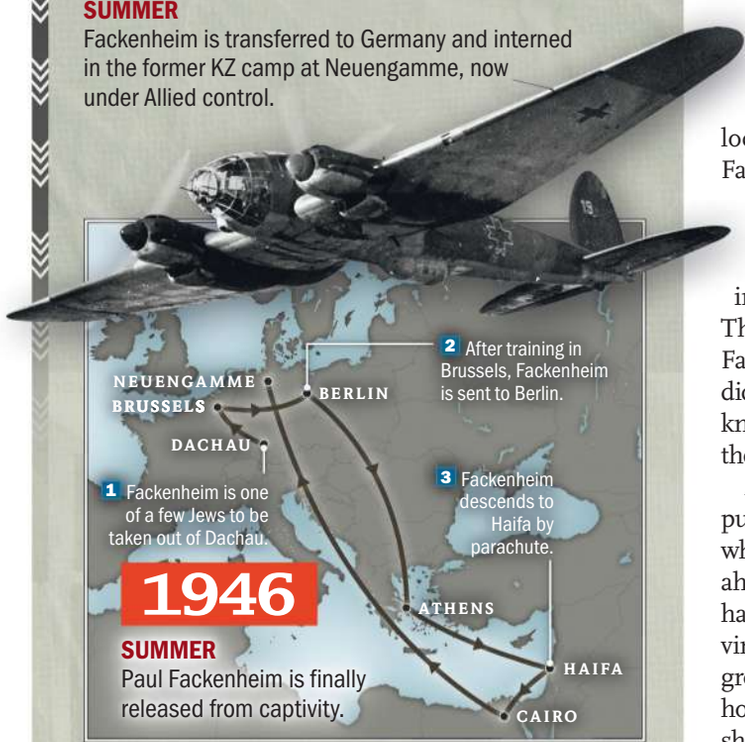
END OF JUNE
The agent arrives in Athens, where he finally gets details about his upcoming mission. Training continues here.

10TH OCTOBER
Fackenheim drops by parachute over Haifa in Palestine, a British Mandate. His radio is smashed, and after a short period he's arrested by the British.

OCTOBER 1941
The prisoner is transported to Cairo. After a series of interrogations culminating in a trial, he stays in camps here for the rest of the war.

1945

SUMMER
Fackenheim is transferred to Germany and interned in the former KZ camp at Neuengamme, now under Allied control.



1946

SUMMER
Paul Fackenheim is finally released from captivity.

from any action which could harm your people... We ask you to collect intelligence about the British... Not about the Jews. Furthermore, you know well how the British are treating the Jewish refugees. You know they prevent them from entering Palestine". Fackenheim allowed himself to be persuaded. He was influenced by his patriotism and the propaganda fed to him by the Abwehr over the past few months. In addition, he worried about his mother's fate.

The training was by now almost complete, and the plan was that Fackenheim would drop into Palestine by parachute. He would be given a radio transmitter and the French novel L'âne Culotte by Henri Bosco. The book's letters formed the basis for a well-rehearsed code system. The idea was that Fackenheim should avoid contact with people in the area. Instead, he would observe the size and location of the English posts and send messages back to the Abwehr from his radio transmitter. Fackenheim nodded nervously and received £500 to sustain him in Palestine.

Equipment plummeted to the ground

It was a dark night as a black-painted German Heinkel HE 111 bomber approached Palestine at an altitude of a few thousand metres. Amid the deafening noise of the plane, a young lieutenant carefully checked Fackenheim's parachute and slapped his shoulder. The hatch opened and Fackenheim felt the rush of cold wind hitting his face. He released his grip on the lieutenant's hand and fell out into the dark.

A moment later, the Jew found himself floating down in the empty night as the sound of the roaring aircraft receded and small lights from Haifa flashed peacefully far below him. He was no longer former prisoner Paul Fackenheim, but Paul Koch, a trained spy in the service of Nazi Germany and prepared to face the English enemy. As he dangled in the air, the agent was unaware that he'd been a pawn in a ruthless game, and his mission was doomed to fail.

When the Abwehr headed by Admiral Wilhelm Canaris retrieved Fackenheim from Dachau, several high-ranking Nazis were furious. His political opponents believed a simple Jew should have remained locked up and would eventually betray Germany. Fackenheim's enemies had repeatedly tried to expose him – including the time he'd been drunk in Athens. But Müller and Canaris had managed to keep hold of him every time. When he'd failed to be exposed, senior German officers instead leaked information about his mission to the British. The Nazis also exaggerated his importance and labelled Fackenheim an important German spy – to ensure the British did everything possible to remove him from action. The British knew nothing of this deception but believed – as planned – that they'd intercepted important German intelligence.

As a result, as Fackenheim descended on Haifa, the British put the entire military on alert. His situation wasn't helped when the rope holding his radio snapped and it plummeted ahead of him – his lifeline to the German intelligence service had been lost. Seconds later, Fackenheim landed unhurt in a vineyard and tried to get his bearings in the dark night. The ground was dry and hard, and it took him over an hour to dig a hole to hide his parachute in. Next, the spy found a hillock to shelter under and tried to sleep. In the darkness, he knew there was no chance of finding the radio. Deep down he felt relief that



The Middle East was a mix of British military, spies and local liberation movements. The British were constantly on guard against enemy agents and carried out frequent raids. Paul Fackenheim was revealed during one of them.

it had probably been destroyed. Now he no longer had to decide whether to send intelligence to Germany.

The sun was high in the sky when Fackenheim woke. A short distance away small groups of people – probably Jews – were on the way to work. He waited for the road to be deserted, brushed his clothes clean of mud and trudged in the same direction. Before long the road had filled with people and nobody appeared to take notice of Fackenheim.

Spy slipped through the roadblock

His anonymity didn't last long. The crowd reached a roadblock where British soldiers were asking suspicious-looking people to show their ID. Fackenheim looked around desperately and approached a young man.

"I need help. I am a refugee from Germany. I landed on the coast last night... What will they do to me if they capture me?"

"If you're lucky, they'll intern you in a detention camp right here in Palestine," the man replied. "[But] quite a lot of people have been transferred to Cyprus lately".

"Listen, I have no papers. Can you help me reach Haifa? I've got five hundred British pounds. I wanted to go to the bank and..."

"You must be out of your mind. You'll be arrested immediately... Give it to me, quick". The young man safely directed Fackenheim through the roadblock and got him on a bus. He said he worked as a nurse at a nearby hospital, he would ask for the day off and take Fackenheim to the Jewish Agency.

When they got off the bus, the young man disappeared into the hospital. The minutes dragged by. On the street, several British soldiers were checking people's papers. They were closing in and Fackenheim suddenly became aware that he'd been tricked, and that the young man had run off with the money.

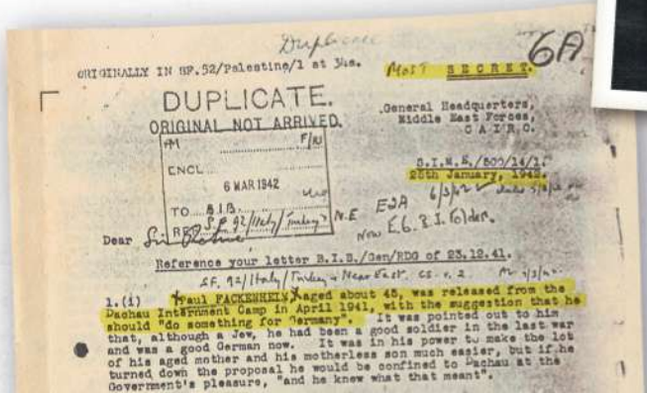
Fackenheim decided to use his fake identity to turn himself in to the British soldiers and pretend to be a German Jewish refugee in the hope of gaining asylum.

Story wasn't believed

Fackenheim immediately ran into problems explaining himself to British captain Arthur Dowden who refused to believe his story about coming over in a fishing boat.

"You say you're a refugee", Dowden said





ORIGINALLY IN WP.52/Palestine/1 at Bde.

MOST SECRET.

DUPLICATE.
ORIGINAL NOT ARRIVED.

General Headquarters,
Middle East Forces,
C A I R O.

6 MAR 1942

TO ... S.I.B.

S.I.M.S./600/14/1
28th January, 1942.

Dear Sir,

Reference your letter S.I.B./Gen/RDG of 23.12.41.

1.(i) Paul FACKENHEIM, aged about 45, was released from the Dachau Internment Camp in April 1941, with the suggestion that he should "do something for Germany". It was pointed out to him that, although a Jew, he had been a good soldier in the last war and was a good German now. It was in his power to make the lot of his aged mother and his motherless son much easier, but if he turned down the proposal he would be confined to Dachau at the Government's pleasure, "and he knew what that meant".

A British report in January 1942 mentioned Fackenheim.



Fackenheim tried to hide a message to the fatherland in a primitive erotic drawing.

sceptically. "But wouldn't you rather talk to me about the German aircraft that visited us last night?"

Fackenheim was physically and mentally exhausted. Clearly, his explanation wouldn't hold up, and so he decided to place his cards on the table. The punishment from the British couldn't possibly be worse than the Germans.

"My name is Paul Ernst Fackenheim. I am Jewish, and my home is in Frankfurt. The Abwehr gave me the code name of Paul Koch", he explained softly.

He then told the whole story of his stay in Dachau, the unexpected offer, training in Belgium and final preparation in Athens. Captain Dowden listened sceptically: Fackenheim sounded naïve, and his explanation was far from what he'd expected from an expert German spy. At British headquarters in Cairo, the military leadership remained convinced that Fackenheim was the agent the British were looking for. A few days later the prisoner was flown under heavy guard to Egypt.

Nude drawing contained Morse code

The fact was that Fackenheim had been caught in the middle of several strange coincidences. Not only had the Nazis convinced the British an important spy had been coming, both his actual name (Fackenheim) and alias (Koch) were remarkably similar to the names of other German suspects. The British had long been in pursuit of a female German spy called Paula Koch, while several intelligence reports suggested a German military figure named Falkenheim was creating a Nazi fifth column in Syria and Lebanon.

The British believed their capture of Paul Fackenheim had given them a way into a larger German spy ring and were determined to get the secret agent to tell the truth. After landing in Cairo, Fackenheim was immediately sent to the Maadi detention camp on the outskirts of the city. Here, the guards threw him into a spartan cell and subjected him to days of mental torture.

"You're going to tell the truth, or else it's curtains for you", shouted an officer, banging his stick on the table. "People like you should be liquidated, and the sooner the better!"

Fackenheim tried to explain himself, but the British wanted more information and refused to believe he was Jewish. For several weeks, the prisoner was kept in isolation, but one day the guards pulled Fackenheim out of the cell and threw him in with another German. The spy was relieved to be in the company of a fellow countryman. The German turned out to

"People like you should be liquidated"

British officer who tried to scare Paul Fackenheim into talking



NAME WILHELM CANARIS

TITLE INTELLIGENCE CHIEF

1887-1945

Admiral hated Hitler

Wilhelm Canaris had already performed intelligence duties as an officer aboard the cruiser *Dresden* during World War I. Thanks to Canaris' efforts, *Dresden* was the only German warship to escape being sunk in the Battle of the Falkland Islands in December 1914.

Canaris rose up through the ranks during the inter-war period and was appointed captain in 1931. He managed to get command of the battleship *Silesia* before he became the head of the Abwehr military intelligence agency in January 1935.

Initially Canaris supported Hitler, who he saw as a bulwark against communism. But the admiral gradually grew more sceptical and engaged with a group of officers who worked against the Führer. Canaris was arrested after the assassination attempt on Hitler in July 1944 and later executed.

- **Was fluent in five languages.**
- **Was sacked as intelligence chief in February 1944.**

be a sergeant who'd been taken prisoner and was now to be exchanged for a British prisoner. The two got on well, and when Fackenheim returned to his cell he had an idea.

After arriving in Palestine and losing the radio transmitter, Fackenheim hadn't given any sign of life to the Abwehr. That night he made a drawing that he asked the sergeant to take back to Germany. The drawing depicted a naked woman, but hid some Morse code, to prove it came from Fackenheim. He'd hoped to convince the German authorities that he'd not betrayed his country, but had been captured, thereby saving his mother.

Firing squad ready

The following morning, Fackenheim was dragged from his cell. He was thrown into a jeep and shortly after dumped in the sand, where a team of soldiers waited with their weapons. An officer stepped away to leave Fackenheim standing alone before the armed men. Finally, the spy understood that he'd been betrayed.

The German friend in the cell was nothing but a decoy to get him to talk. Fackenheim hadn't revealed much in the way of new information, but had clearly attempted to send a message to the Abwehr with his drawing.

"If you have decided to shoot me, I would have preferred to be told in advance. I don't appreciate surprises".

The British officer regarded Fackenheim for a moment and then gave out a shrill laugh. "What the hell are you talking about? I brought you over here to show you the pyramids at sunrise".

The soldiers rested their rifles and Fackenheim was sent back to the cell – more mentally broken than before. The sweat was pouring off him, and the next day he was exposed to more interrogation and eventually forced to write his own farewell letter. But all to no avail. Fackenheim had nothing more to say, and in the end the interrogators simply quit. Shortly after, the 8th British Army entered Libya and interest in both Palestine and Fackenheim faded rapidly.

After several months in a new cell, Fackenheim was tried by a military court on charges of espionage and provided with a defence lawyer. Both sides found it difficult to find any conclusive evidence, and the trial ended with Fackenheim's acquittal. When the judgement fell, the room darkened and he collapsed. After months of uncertainty, someone finally believed his explanation.

The acquittal didn't lead to his release, however. Instead, he was later sent to the internment camp at Latrun in Palestine where, at least, he could move freely and speak to other prisoners. In the camp he encountered captured ministers, spies and officials who'd worked for Nazi Germany. Fackenheim remained in Latrun until the collapse of Nazi Germany in 1945. From there he was sent to the Neuengamme KZ camp, now under Allied control, before being released the following year.

On 23rd June, 1946 he finally returned to Frankfurt's ruins. He found his mother's house empty and was told she'd been arrested by the Gestapo in 1943 and sent to the KZ camp at Theresienstadt, where she died. Broken, Paul Fackenheim moved to a small town outside Hamburg to live a quiet life.

Possible reason for the mystery

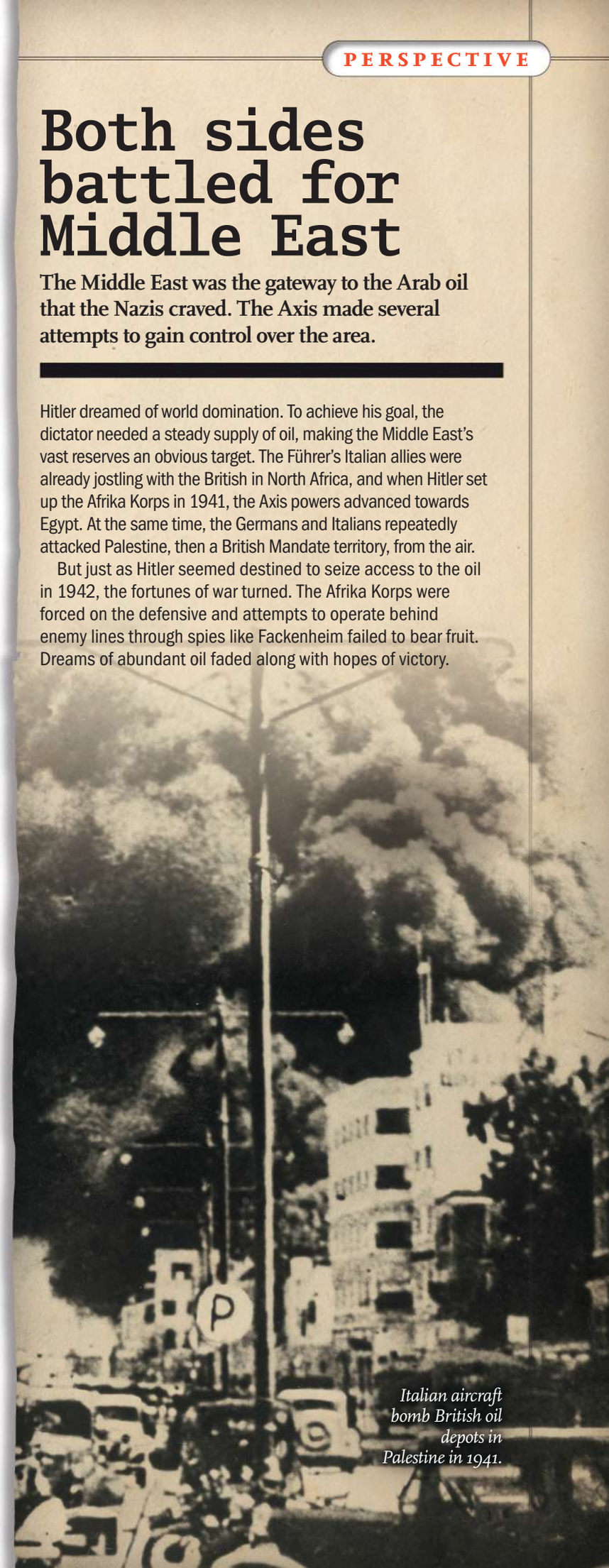
The Abwehr probably chose a former prisoner to spy because no one imagined the British would suspect a Jew in Palestine. The selection of Fackenheim might also have been a discreet rebuke to Hitler from the Abwehr chief Wilhelm Canaris, who disliked Nazi racial policies.

Both sides battled for Middle East

The Middle East was the gateway to the Arab oil that the Nazis craved. The Axis made several attempts to gain control over the area.

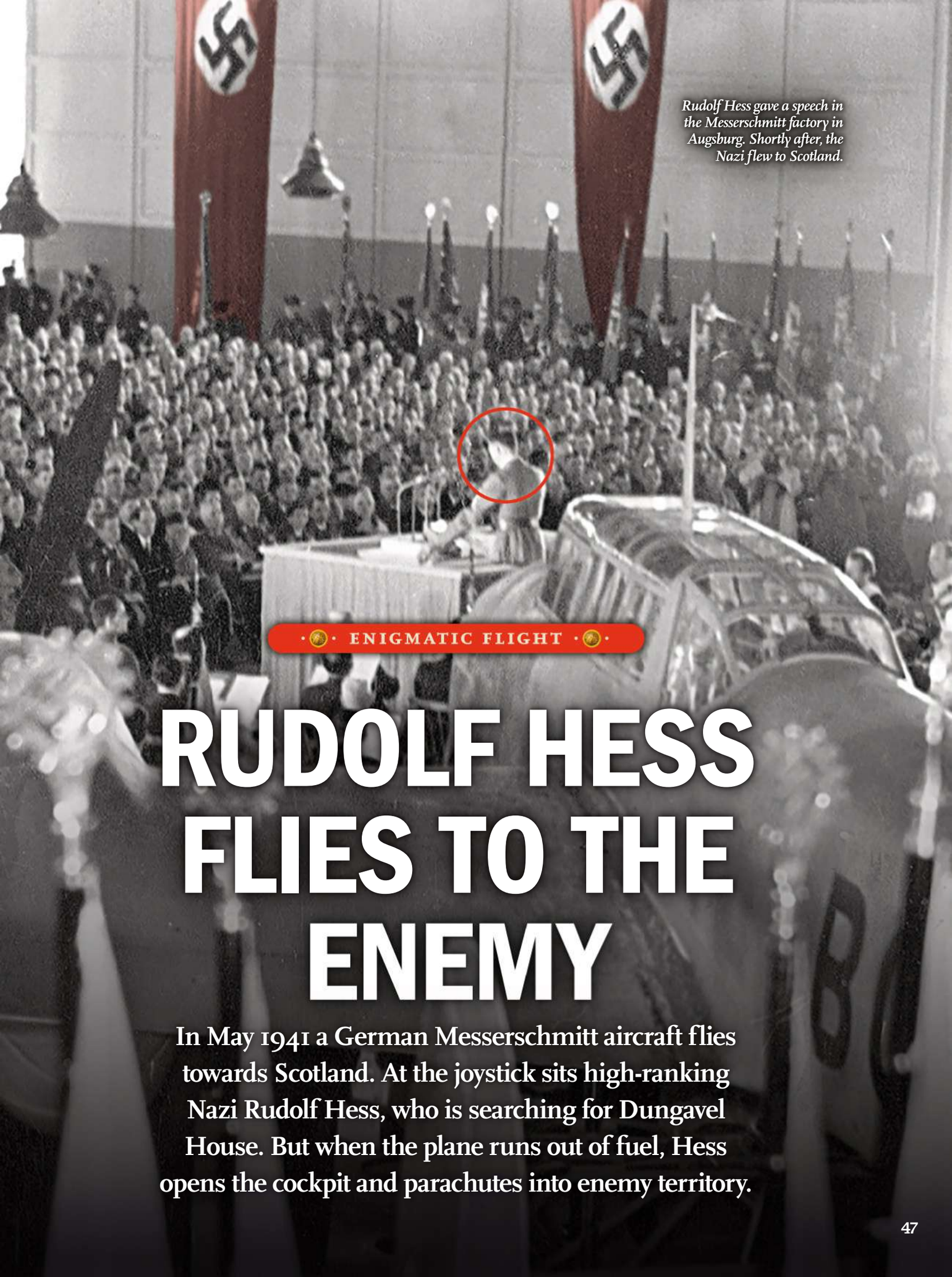
Hitler dreamed of world domination. To achieve his goal, the dictator needed a steady supply of oil, making the Middle East's vast reserves an obvious target. The Führer's Italian allies were already jostling with the British in North Africa, and when Hitler set up the Afrika Korps in 1941, the Axis powers advanced towards Egypt. At the same time, the Germans and Italians repeatedly attacked Palestine, then a British Mandate territory, from the air.

But just as Hitler seemed destined to seize access to the oil in 1942, the fortunes of war turned. The Afrika Korps were forced on the defensive and attempts to operate behind enemy lines through spies like Fackenheim failed to bear fruit. Dreams of abundant oil faded along with hopes of victory.



Italian aircraft bomb British oil depots in Palestine in 1941.


MYSTERY: **WHY DID THIS SENIOR NAZI
FLY TO SCOTLAND?**
1941
10TH MAY



Rudolf Hess gave a speech in the Messerschmitt factory in Augsburg. Shortly after, the Nazi flew to Scotland.

ENIGMATIC FLIGHT

RUDOLF HESS FLIES TO THE ENEMY

In May 1941 a German Messerschmitt aircraft flies towards Scotland. At the joystick sits high-ranking Nazi Rudolf Hess, who is searching for Dungavel House. But when the plane runs out of fuel, Hess opens the cockpit and parachutes into enemy territory.

Scotland, 1941

THE STAGE IS SET



In May 1941 a German Messerschmitt aircraft flies towards Scotland. At the joystick sits high-ranking Nazi Rudolf Hess, who is searching in vain for Dungavel House. But when the plane runs out of fuel, Hess is forced to open the cockpit and parachute into enemy territory.

Dressed in a blue-grey Luftwaffe uniform with blue shirt and dark blue tie, and wearing long boots, Rudolf Hess strode into the living room of his Munich home. His wife Ilse gave him a quizzical stare and asked why her husband was dressed so elegantly.

"To make you happy", Hess replied. A little later, he kissed his wife goodbye, saying he had to go to the city of Augsburg and then on to Berlin.

"When are you coming back?" Ilse asked.

"I don't know exactly. Maybe by tomorrow, but certainly by Monday evening at the latest", Hess promised. "Tomorrow? Monday evening? I don't believe you'll be back so soon", Ilse argued. But her husband provided no further explanation. A few hours later, Hess would climb into the cockpit of a modified Messerschmitt Bf 110 fighter plane, which the Nazi had been learning to master since autumn 1940. The plane was in a hangar at the airfield at the Messerschmitt factory in Augsburg, ready for take-off. It contained two extra fuel tanks with a combined capacity of 1,800 litres, giving the plane a range of around 2,500 kilometres.

The extra fuel was necessary because the plane's intended destination was not Berlin, but Scotland. At 17.30, the tanned pilot settled into his seat wearing a fur-lined flying helmet and black leather jumpsuit over his Luftwaffe uniform. Hess first checked

"When are you coming back?"

Ilse Hess to her husband Rudolf Hess, 10th May, 1941



Hess developed a close relationship with Hitler during his stay in Landsberg Prison after the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923.

both parachute and flight instruments and then carefully fixed a map to his thigh, so he could easily orient himself during the flight. The Nazi was ready for departure and pressed the start button for the two engines, which broke out into a roar, sending out thick clouds of bluish smoke through the exhaust.

Hess radioed the control tower to ask permission to take off, and shortly after the aircraft rolled with a deafening roar down the 1,100-metre grass runway. At 17.45, he gently pulled back on the control stick, at which the plane left the ground and slowly rose into the sky.

Duke was supposed to be an intermediary

The flight to Scotland was the culmination of several months of busy preparations. For six months, Hess had studied a map of northwestern Europe and the North Sea and in recent weeks had scrutinised weather forecasts from meteorologists on a daily basis. In addition, the senior Nazi had been busy modifying and equipping his Bf 110 for the long flight while getting to know the heavy fighter aircraft.

Hess had been on several training trips with his personal Bf 110 and practiced taking off, landing and flying over mountainous areas. Gradually, the pilot became well prepared to traverse the Scottish hills on the road to Dungavel House – a distinguished residence 25 kilometres south of Glasgow, where the Duke of Hamilton resided.

Since the summer of 1940, the Luftwaffe had bombed British cities and air bases to force the British to surrender. A solo flight into enemy territory in a Messerschmitt painted with German markings seemed suicidal. But Hess, who was distraught over the war against Britain, had a plan. He would – with the Duke of Hamilton as an intermediary – attempt to negotiate peace with the British government.

Hitler lost interest in Hess

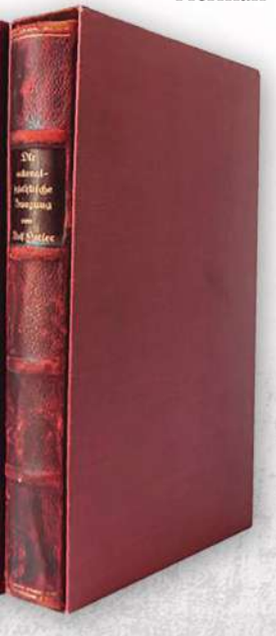
When the Bf 110 set course towards Scotland on 10th May, 1941, Hess was far from former glories, as the top Nazi's career had nosedived in recent years. From 1920, Hess had stood shoulder to shoulder with Hitler, acting as the Führer's staunch supporter and adviser. After the Nazis took power in 1933, Hitler rewarded Hess by appointing him his deputy and number two in the party. But after the outbreak of war, the deputy's star fell and his influence had waned considerably – Hitler had pushed his faithful servant onto the sidelines and appointed Luftwaffe chief Herman Göring as his successor.

To make matters worse, Hess's own secretary Martin Bormann turned his back on the dethroned Nazi to become Hitler's personal secretary and thus one of the most powerful men in Germany.

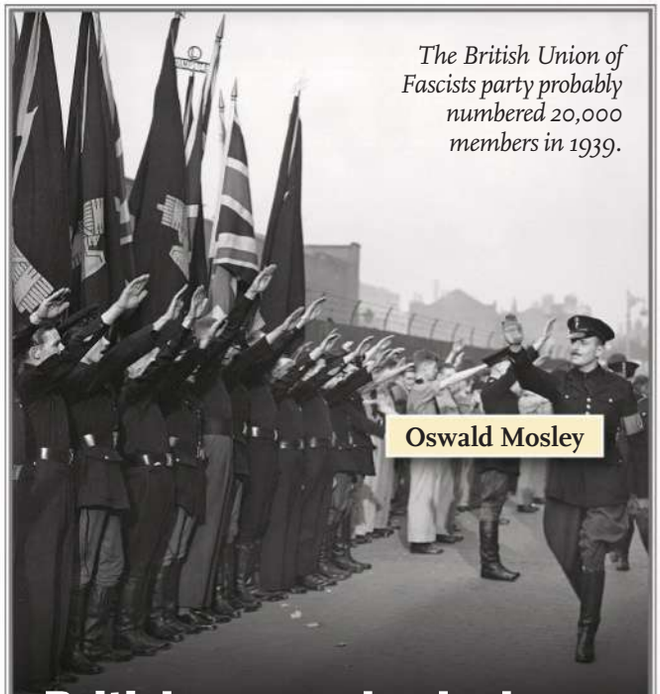
Fighters were scrambled

After around three hours flying over the North Sea, Hess approached the Northumberland coast and the chain of radar stations that kept an eye on enemy aircraft around the clock. Shortly after sunset at 22.08 Ottercops Moss radar station detected the Messerschmitt as it entered British airspace, an observation quickly confirmed by other stations. Two Spitfires already in the air were told to investigate the mysterious aircraft, but the British failed to spot the Bf 110. Fighter Command scrambled two more planes to chase down the alien plane, but they too came back empty handed.

The Royal Observer Corps (ROC) were, however, able to plot Hess' flight path like beads on a string, all the way from the moment the Bf 110 passed over the English coast to when it crossed the border into Scotland at 22.30. Hess had carefully planned his flight in detail from his desk at home in Munich and carefully memorised Dungavel's appearance, but as the Nazi hung over Scotland in the late twilight, he



Hess wrote the manuscript of Mein Kampf *as dictated to him by Hitler during his stay in Landsberg Prison in 1924.*



The British Union of Fascists party probably numbered 20,000 members in 1939.

British groups backed Hitler for different reasons

Several pro-Nazi groups sprang up in Britain, and in 1932 a former minister became leader of an outright fascist party.

In the 1930s, groups of senior Britons attempted to cultivate close ties with Hitler's Germany and work for peace between the two nations. Some of the groups were opponents of Hitler, but wanted to diffuse the conflict between Britain and Germany. Others were ardently pro-Nazi, making no attempt to hide their hatred of Jews or warm feelings towards the Führer.

One of the most active groups was The Link, which was founded in 1937 by, among others, Nazi sympathiser Barry Domvile with the aim of promoting Anglo-German friendship. In 1940 Domvile was arrested because he was considered a threat to national security. The UK had its own decisively fascist party in the form of the British Union of Fascists, founded in 1932 by Oswald Mosley. In 1940, the party was banned, and Mosley imprisoned.

Bf 110 fighter slipped through British airspace

After more than two hours flying over the North Sea, Hess reached enemy airspace, but Britain's highly acclaimed air defences failed to stop his Messerschmitt.



6 Hess jumps out

22.45: Hess passes close by Dungavel House, located approximately 25 kilometres south-south-east of Glasgow. In the dark, Hess can't recognise either the building or a landing strip situated in front of the estate.

23.06: Hess parachutes from approximately 1,800 metres. The plane crashes to the ground and bursts into flames at 23.09.

Messerschmitt Bf 110 armaments included four MG-17 machine guns.

5 British aircraft take to the skies

22.35: a British fighter is scrambled. At the joystick sits Flight Lieutenant William A Cuddie, who has been ordered to shoot the enemy plane down. The pilot is forced to abandon his search for the plane, however.

4 Radar station detects plane

22.08: Ottercops Moss radar station detects Hess's Messerschmitt. Two Spitfires already on the wing are directed towards the enemy aircraft.

3 Submarines think Hess is the enemy

20.10: Hess passes over two German submarines, which begin to dive when their lookouts spot his plane. They discover, however, that the plane is German, and remain on the surface.

2 The plane follows the Dutch coast

19.28: Hess reaches Holland's coast. The Nazi follows the coastline about 100 kilometres before turning out over the North Sea at 19.58.

The wreckage of Hess's plane was guarded by the local Home Guard to prevent looting.

FACTS

HESS'S PREPARATIONS

■ **Astrology:** Rudolf Hess decided to fly to Scotland on Saturday, 10th May, 1941 because the planets and the moon allegedly stood in a favourable position for the German's peace mission.

■ **Navigation:** Hess installed a radio compass in the plane that could detect Danish radio's long-wave transmitter at Kalundborg. The transmitter was on the same latitude as Hess's destination.

■ **Medicines:** Hess brought 28 kinds of medicines, including stimulants as well as tablets for air sickness and pain relief.



1 Nazi sets course for Great Britain

17.45: Rudolf Hess takes off from the airfield in Augsburg. The pilot takes a large turn to the right over the Lech river and heads north-west towards the cities of Bonn and Cologne.



Luftwaffe pilots wore leather helmets with built-in headphones.

couldn't make out the building's distinctive spires and towers that should have protruded visibly over the wooded terrain.

The ground beneath the pilot was in complete darkness, and although Hess vainly flew back and forth, he couldn't find Dungavel or a spot to land front of the house.

By now the Nazi had completely lost his bearings, but a glance at the fuel gauge told him he didn't have any more time to try and find Dungavel. The tank was almost empty and in the absence of a landing spot, Hess was forced to bail out – for the first time in his life.

The pilot climbed to 1,800 metres, switched off the engines and opened the cockpit, but violent pressure from his plane's speed made it impossible for Hess to push out of the plane that was now sinking rapidly towards the ground.

To escape, the Nazi rolled the plane belly up. Hess lost consciousness during the manoeuvre, but quickly came to, pushed his legs against the bottom of the plane and fell backwards into the air and out of the plane before deploying his parachute. The Bf 110 crashed into the ground, exploding into flames and a few seconds later Hess too hit the ground in a field. The man who was once Nazi Germany's third most important person was now in Scotland around 20 kilometres west of Hamilton's estate.

SCOT OFFERED A CUP OF TEA

Farmer David McLean heard the noise of an aircraft passing dangerously low over his yard. Looking out of his window, he saw to his horror a plane crashing to the ground in flames. The Scot ran out of the door just as Hess hit the ground to be dragged along by his parachute.

McLean rushed to his unexpected guest and helped him to his feet. "Are you German?" The Scot asked.

"Yes, I am Hauptmann (Captain) Alfred Horn. I have an important message for the Duke of Hamilton", the German replied in English.

Hess had injured his back and foot, but McLean helped the German into his house, where the Scot's 64-year-old mother met them in her dressing gown.

"Will you have a cup of tea?" She asked Hess.

"Thank you, no. It is too early for me to drink tea, but I would like a glass of water if you have one", he answered, as news of the parachutist spread amazingly

"Never mind Hess… I'm going to see the Marx Brothers"

Winston Churchill after being informed of Hess's flight

"My Führer, when you receive this

Rudolf Hess in a letter was handed to Adolf

quickly across the whole area, and police, military personnel and curious farmers descended on McLean's farm.

One of those who hurried to the farm was Major Graham Donald from the Scottish Royal Observer Corps. The officer studied the German's face carefully and believed he recognised him as Rudolf Hess. Donald interrogated the pilot and listened agape as the German explained he was on a special mission and had an important message for the Duke of Hamilton.

At night, Hess was driven to the Maryhill barracks in Glasgow where he was treated for his injuries. Despite the late hour, the Nazi stubbornly insisted on a meeting with the Duke. The British allowed the men to meet at 10.00 the next day, but Hamilton was astonished to find a German pilot wished to meet with him. The German presented himself to the Duke as Rudolf Hess, explaining that he was on peace mission to try and end the fighting between Germany and Britain. Hamilton, however, had no sympathy for the German's case and found it incomprehensible. The Briton explained to Hess that even if Germany and Britain made peace, the countries would soon be at war with each other again.

Churchill preferred the Marx Brothers

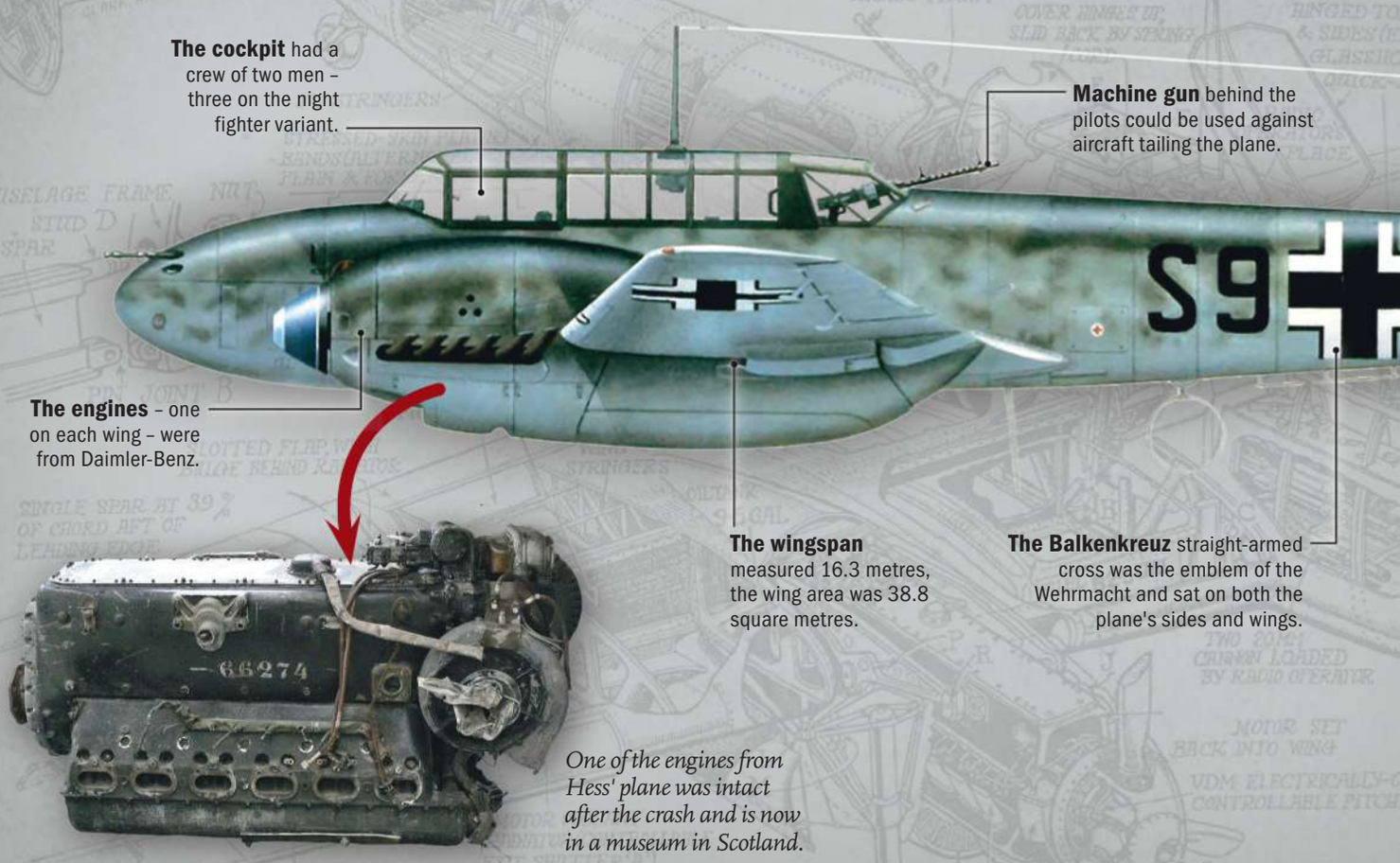
Hess wouldn't give up so easily. The Nazi mistakenly assumed the Duke was in opposition to the Prime Minister Winston Churchill and suggested that Hamilton "get together with members of his party to talk things over with a view to making peace proposals". Some hours later, the Duke of Hamilton flew to Ditchley in Oxfordshire where Churchill was spending the weekend with Secretary of State for Air Archibald Sinclair.

Over the phone the Duke had briefly talked about a prominent prisoner from Germany, and when the men finally

AIRCRAFT

Fighter planes tore into enemy

The German Messerschmitt Bf 110 heavy fighter was armed with five machine guns and two 20 mm cannons – making it a powerful opponent in the air war.



One of the engines from Hess' plane was intact after the crash and is now in a museum in Scotland.

letter I shall be in England"

Hitler after his flight to Britain

met on Sunday night, Churchill exclaimed jovially: "Now, come and tell us this funny story of yours".

The Prime Minister expressed only moderate surprise at what he was told: "Well, never mind Hess for the moment. I'm going to see the Marx Brothers". He then sat down to watch a movie with the American showbiz siblings.

The next day, however, Churchill took Hamilton to 10 Downing Street, where the Hess affair was discussed with members of the War Cabinet and Chiefs of Staff. The meeting decided to let an expert on German affairs, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, take a closer look at the important prisoner. He'd repeatedly met Hess in person and could probably make a reliable identification.

The same day Kirkpatrick and Hamilton flew back to Scotland, where in the meantime Hess had been transferred to a military hospital at Drymen, near Loch Lomond. Kirkpatrick recognised Hess, who took the opportunity to deliver an hour-long monologue. The Nazi listed numerous peace terms to his increasingly irritated guests. Hess knew, however, that news of his journey to Britain would have angered Hitler so much that Nazi Germany would never recognise his peace mission.



The start button on Hess' plane launched two engines that gave it a top speed of approximately 550 km/h.

Swastika sat on the tail rudder.

Hess had more than 20 years' experience as a pilot when he flew to Britain.

Adolf Hitler raged

On the morning of Sunday, 11th May, Hess's adjutant Karlheinz Pintsch was granted an audience with Hitler. He handed over a sealed letter to the Führer who immediately opened the envelope and began to read Hess's message. "My Führer, when you receive this letter I shall be in England", the first line read.

The dictator's face darkened with rage, and as the truth of Hess's mission became clear, the Führer emitted an "inarticulate, almost animal-like outcry", according to Albert Speer. Hitler did at least take one piece of advice from the letter: if the peace mission failed, he should issue a statement denouncing Hess as crazy.

The following day – 12th May – at 20.00, the Nazi Party made an official statement by radio, stating that Hess had embarked "on a flight from which he has not yet returned. A letter he left behind unfortunately showed traces of mental disturbances which justify the fear that Hess was the victim of hallucinations".

Hitler also announced that he knew nothing of the flight, that all of Hess's adjutants would be arrested and that it was assumed that "Party Comrade Hess has crashed or met with a similar accident".

Despondency descended

Several hours after German radio announced Hess's flight, the news also broke in the British media. Both BBC Radio and the country's newspapers sensationally reported that Hitler's former deputy had been taken into custody and was well despite injuries from his parachute jump over Scotland.

Doctors had by now examined Hess from head to toe and judged that the German was well enough to be moved. The famous prisoner was transported south on a night train and incarcerated in the Tower of London from 17th-21st May. He was then escorted under heavy guard around 50 kilometres south-west of London to Mytchett Place manor house – codenamed Camp Z – in Aldershot. "He should be treated with dignity, as if he were an important general who had fallen into our hands", was Churchill's command, and his order was complied with,

Although Hess was detained as a prisoner at Camp Z, several rooms were made available to the German. In spite of his relatively fine conditions, the prisoner could not, however, find peace of mind. The Nazi asked on an almost daily basis for another meeting with the Duke of Hamilton, but when Hess finally realised that his peace mission had ended in resounding failure, he

NAME **RUDOLF HESS**
TITLE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO
1894-1987

Hess was Hitler's private secretary

Rudolf Hess heard Adolf Hitler speak for the first time in 1920 and fell for Germany's future dictator. Hess volunteered for the newly formed Nazi party and was closely linked to the Führer. When both Nazis were imprisoned in 1924 Hess used the time to write the first volume of *Mein Kampf* from Hitler's dictation. After his release in 1925 Hess served as Hitler's private secretary for several years.



- **Was injured during World War I.**
- **Given Reich ministerial post in 1933.**

NAME **DOUGLAS DOUGLAS-HAMILTON**
TITLE DUKE
1903-1973

Duke flew over Mount Everest

As a young man Douglas Douglas-Hamilton was a renowned boxer, but later in life flying became the Duke's passion. Hamilton won a reputation as one of the best pilots in Europe and became world-famous in 1933 when he took part in the first flight over Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain. Hess, himself an avid pilot, admired Hamilton's abilities in a plane.



- **Given Air Force Cross in 1935.**
- **Was a Member of Parliament.**

sank into melancholy. In an effort to keep his depression at bay, Hess wrote numerous letters to his wife, son, parents and even Hitler:

"I die in the conviction that my last mission, even if it ends in death, will somehow bear fruit. Perhaps my flight will bring, despite my death, or indeed partly because of my death, peace and reconciliation with England", Hess wrote on 14th June to his Führer.

Two days later, the prisoner attempted to commit suicide by throwing himself over a banister and on to a stone floor. Miraculously, the Nazi survived the attempt, but at the cost of a broken femur and several months of hellish agony. Over the following months and years, Hess became more and more erratic – as Germany's position in the war grew worse, the more he complained about his health. He was adamant the British were trying to poison him. Doctors who regularly oversaw the German's health assessed, however, that their celebrity patient was a hypochondriac with paranoid traits and a tendency to hysteria.

The question was whether Hess had always been mentally unstable, so that the mission was symptomatic of a sick mind, or had several people had been involved in its planning?

Myths about mission have flourished

Since 1941, researchers have pondered whether Hess acted on his own. The lack of a completely bulletproof answer has fuelled several theories and myths.

One theory goes that the Duke of Hamilton was in cahoots with Hitler's former deputy. According to the myth, the Briton sympathised with Hitler and hoped to stop the war between Britain and Germany with Hess's help. The theory, however, lacks any substance and is based around the fact that Hess had turned to an old acquaintance, Albrecht Haushofer, in September 1940. The Nazi needed help to find a suitable contact in the higher echelons of British society. Haushofer pointed to his friend the Duke of Hamilton, whom he'd stayed with at Dungavel House before the war. At Hess's urging, Haushofer wrote a letter to the duke on 23rd September, 1940 suggesting a meeting on neutral ground in Lisbon. The Briton did not reply to the letter, but the disappointing response did not stop Hess from furthering his plans.

The fact is, however, that the duke neither harboured sympathy for Hitler, nor was he a member of a party hostile to the government as Hess had thought.

Another persistent theory is that British intelligence deceived Hitler's former deputy. The British could have lured Hess into a trap by leaking false stories that prominent people in Britain were planning to overthrow Churchill to initiate peace negotiations with Germany. Proponents of the theory argue that the British purposely let Hess pass unscathed through British air defences. Documents confirm, however, that four fighters were ordered to attack – not escort – the German's plane, but they failed to find the Messerschmitt.

A third common myth is that the Nazi was in fact sent by Hitler in an effort to initiate peace talks between Berlin and London. Peace would enable the Wehrmacht to avoid a war on two fronts when Germany later invaded the Soviet Union. Historians have found no evidence to support this theory – on the contrary, several witnesses reported that the Führer was furious at the news of Hess's flight and said that he deserved to be shot as a traitor.

Hitler's deputy ended in Spandau

Peace between Britain and Nazi Germany failed to materialise, and Hitler's former deputy would remain in British custody until the war ended. In the autumn of 1945,

"He should be treated… as if he were [a] general who had fallen into our hands"

Winston Churchill's instructions to the British prison system for the treatment of Rudolf Hess

Hess along with a host of other high-ranking Nazis were put on trial at Nuremberg, Although Hitler's former deputy complained of memory loss and claimed he had no recollection of Herman Göring, Hess was declared fit for punishment and sentenced to life imprisonment.

On 18th July, 1947, the former Nazi was flown to Berlin and incarcerated in Spandau Prison where his sentence was to be served. Over 22 years later, on 24th December, 1969, he saw his wife Ilse and his son Rüdiger Wolf for the first time since leaving for Scotland. Hess did not come home to the family "tomorrow, but certainly by Monday evening" as he'd promised on 10th May, 1941. In fact, the father never returned home, but died in prison in 1987 – allegedly through suicide.

POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE MYSTERY

Presumably, Rudolf Hess acted on his own during the mission. The Nazi had been driven onto the sidelines in the Third Reich, and perhaps he hoped that a successful outcome would restore the Führer's confidence in him.

PERSPECTIVE

Swede attempted to prevent the war

Rudolf Hess was not alone in conducting peace talks before and during World War II. In 1939, the amateur diplomat Birger Dahlerus tried to prevent a German invasion of Poland and thus a war between the great powers of Europe.

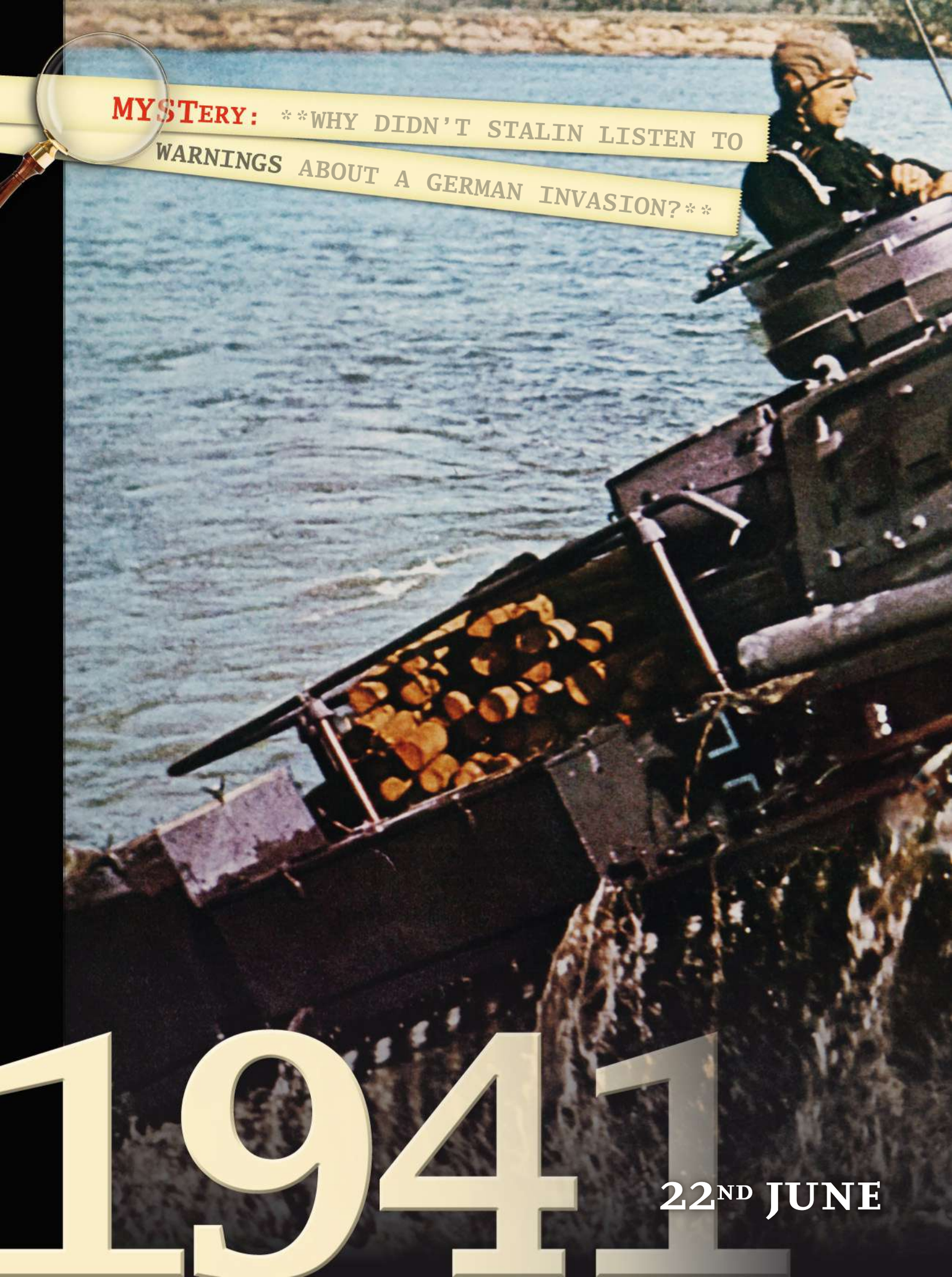


The Swede Birger Dahlerus tried to prevent World War II through his friendship with Hermann Göring.

When the German invasion of Poland in 1939 approached, Swedish businessman Birger Dahlerus tried to broker peace between his friend Hermann Göring and several influential English businessmen. Hoping to avert the outbreak of war at the last minute, Dahlerus invited both parties to an informal meeting at his wife's country house in northern Germany on 7th August, 1939. The meeting appeared to go as Dahlerus had hoped: after several hours of serious talks Göring promised that Germany would never attack Britain and called for a toast to peace. But when the war continued to threaten, the Swede desperately continued trying to mediate. As late as 31st August, 1939, Dahlerus met with Göring in Berlin.

But the amateur diplomat's efforts were in vain: early in the morning on 1st September, 1939 the Wehrmacht invaded Poland before Poland's allies Britain and France declared war on Germany.

A German tank followed by infantry attacks Polish forces in September 1939.


MYSTERY: **WHY DIDN'T STALIN LISTEN TO WARNINGS ABOUT A GERMAN INVASION?**
1941
22ND JUNE



A tank from the SS division Das Reich crosses a river during Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.

OPERATION BARBAROSSA

SOVIET DICTATOR TURNS A BLIND EYE

Joseph Stalin is in shock, and the Red Army are totally unprepared when German troops roll into the Soviet Union in the early morning of 22nd June, 1941. Despite warnings from agents, border guards and officers of an imminent Nazi attack, the Soviet dictator has chosen to ignore all information about Hitler's invasion plans.

Moscow, 1939–1941

THE STAGE IS SET



In August 1939 Germany and the Soviet Union sign a non-aggression pact, which will see greater cooperation between the great powers. However, the Kremlin receives information about a planned German attack on the Soviet Union. But Stalin refuses to heed the warnings and does nothing to prepare for an invasion.

It took three minutes before Joseph Stalin reached the phone, but for General Georgy Zhukov the wait felt like an eternity. When the Soviet dictator finally took the receiver, words tumbled from the general's mouth. German planes were bombing the Soviet Union on a broad front, he said. Cities were on fire, including Sevastopol, the large and important naval port on the Crimean peninsula. The general asked permission to launch an immediate counterattack. Zhukov's breathless vocal stream was answered with silence. The officer could only hear the sound of Stalin's breathing, which was ominously heavy and deep. "Did you understand me?" asked Zhukov nervously. "Comrade Stalin?" the general urged when he still did not get a response. Finally Stalin spoke, but the Soviet leader gave no answer to Zhukov's request. Instead the short-tempered dictator ordered the Politburo and the military leaders to set up an urgent meeting.

When the meeting began an hour later – at 05.45, 22nd June, 1941 – Stalin's speech was incomprehensible. Pale and disoriented the Soviet leader sat at a green felt table while he fiddled with his pipe in his hand, muttering incoherently.

Stalin's shocked state was understandable, because Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union was overwhelming and devastating. Within a few hours 98 German divisions had crossed the border over a 1,200-kilometre front from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Carpathian Mountains in the south. Bombers spread death and destruction to cities and military installations from Leningrad to Izmail in Ukraine. The Red Army's air force was particularly badly hit. Several thousand planes were destroyed before the aircraft could take flight. The attack should have come as no surprise, however. Military



Stalin could intercept conversations between members of the Politburo using a secret rotary phone.

Joseph Stalin chose not to believe the reports warning of an attack on the Soviet Union.

leaders, agents, soldiers, railway workers and border guards had time and again provided solid evidence that a German invasion was coming. Stalin, however, chose to ignore all warnings – perhaps because two years earlier, the Soviet leader had bound himself to an alliance with Nazi Germany's dictator Adolf Hitler.

Stalin befriended Hitler under duress

The Soviet leader's relationship with Hitler was, however, strained from the beginning. The Führer had never concealed his ambition of annexing Soviet territory to Nazi Germany. The idea that areas in the east could be included as "Lebensraum" for the German population, while delivering oil, grain and other useful resources to the Third Reich, was at the core of Nazi ideology. Stalin knew what the Nazis wanted, but until the late 1930s the Soviet leader saw no evidence that Hitler would follow through on his threat for the foreseeable future.

At the same time the Soviet dictator was busy with other projects. The country was technologically and militarily backward when Stalin took power after Lenin's death in 1924, and he'd launched an ambitious, large-scale industrialisation programme. Money from the export of agricultural products was used to build factories, and the arms industry was a particular area of growth.

In 1938, however, it became difficult for the Soviet Union to ignore Nazi Germany's expansionist aspirations. First Hitler annexed Austria, then Sudetenland and the year after the rest of Czechoslovakia. The western European powers did nothing to prevent the expansion. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain spoke rather excitedly about "peace for our time". Stalin quickly realised that the Russians would stand alone when the Germans decided to invade the Soviet Union. The dictator chose to make the best of Hitler's aspirations for conquest, and on 23rd August, 1939 the Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov signed a non-aggression pact with his German counterpart, Joachim von Ribbentrop.

The pact committed the countries to neutrality in case of conflict with third countries and also included an additional secret protocol that divided Eastern Europe into two chunks, one Nazi Germany, the other Soviet. Stalin claimed Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Bessarabia and eastern Poland, while its western part was German. On 1st September, 1939 Hitler's forces attacked Poland from the west, and a few weeks later Stalin's troops – in full accordance with the non-aggression pact – invaded the country from the east.

Soviet Union got early warnings

The Soviet Union possessed an extensive network of spies and agents and a source in Bulgaria came forward with some ominous news. At the beginning of June 1940 Hitler was close to defeating France, and according to the source, the Nazi dictator was already plotting the next step in his quest for European domination.

According to the source, a report written by Ivan Proskurov, the head of Soviet military intelligence, said that the Germans "aspired to conclude an armistice with France. Italy would then threaten France militarily, and peace would result. After a peace agreement, Germany would put its army in order, to make the army ready and together with Italy

GERMAN-SOVIET ALLIANCE

STALIN JOINS FORCES WITH HITLER

1939

23RD AUGUST:
Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov signs a non-aggression pact with his German counterpart, Joachim von Ribbentrop. The ministers also sign a secret protocol that, among other things, divides Poland between both countries.

1ST SEPTEMBER:
Germany invades Poland in line with the secret protocol. The Soviet Union attacks Poland on 17th September.



The alliance between made the front page of the magazine Le Rire.

1940

11TH FEBRUARY:
The Soviet Union and Germany sign a trade agreement that gives the Third Reich the opportunity to purchase oil and other raw materials from the Soviet Union. A British blockade has limited German imports of commodities.

JUNE-AUGUST:
The Soviet Union occupies the Baltic states and Bessarabia in accordance with the secret protocol.

12TH-15TH NOVEMBER:
Molotov visits Berlin to negotiate a military alliance with Germany and the other two Axis powers, Japan and Italy. The plans however, make no difference.

1941

10TH JANUARY:
The Soviet Union and Germany sign a common border and trade deal. The agreement gives the Germans expanded access to raw materials. Six months later the Third Reich attacks the Soviet Union during Operation Barbarossa.



Soviet villages went up in flames in their hundreds during Operation Barbarossa in 1941.

and Japan make a sudden attack on the USSR". Four days after the Bulgarian source had reported to Proskurov, the Italians attacked France. On 22nd June, the French signed an armistice with Germany and two days later signed with Italy. About a month later Hitler met with German generals at the Berghof where the Führer stated that "the Soviet Union had to be addressed" and outlined plans for an invasion.

Soviet leader hoped for attrition

Proskurov's report was sent to Stalin, but the Soviet dictator's reaction to the information was never known. The warning was only one of many. During the following year one revelation after another documenting the Germans' plans were exposed. From Switzerland the Hungarian agent Alexander Rado announced on 21st February, 1941 that "Germany has 150 divisions in the east... the German offensive will begin at the end of May". Yet neither Stalin nor the Soviet generals felt any reason to sound the alarm. The spy Richard Sorge, who had sources in the highest of German circles, repeatedly warned that German divisions were heading east from France, but the information was ignored.

An intelligence report from Prague on 17th April announced that: "Senior German officers stationed in Czechoslovakia have told friends that German divisions are concentrating on the western borders of the USSR. It is believed that Hitler will attack the USSR in the second half of June". Stalin exploded on hearing this: "English provocation!" he wrote angrily in red ink in the report's margin.

The choice of words was revealing. Stalin refused to believe that Hitler would attack the Soviet Union before he had defeated Britain. The presumption was not totally wrong, because Hitler had originally planned a landing on the English coast – Operation Sea Lion – in 1940, but since RAF resistance had proved too strong, the Führer postponed his invasion plans indefinitely. Developments during the Battle of Britain negated all Stalin's previous beliefs. When the Soviet dictator signed the non-aggression pact, he'd hoped to launch Germany and capitalist Western Europe into a long and exhausting war that would prepare the entire continent for communism and Soviet domination. Stalin did not respond to the new strategic situation – he refused to accept that Hitler had changed plans and that the situation had become far less favourable for the Soviet Union.

Agents feared dictator

Stalin was not the only one to deny reality, because many of the agents' reports on the postponement of Operation Sea

Soviet leader's paranoia weakened the Red Army

In the mid-1930s, the Soviet Union's army was a modern and well-equipped force, but Stalin purged officers and let equipment deteriorate.

The quality of the Soviet military plummeted in the late 1930s, when Stalin was gripped by fear of a military coup and therefore executed and deported thousands of officers. The purges particularly hit senior officers where, for example, three out of five marshals were removed from their posts. Stalin's anger went beyond removing the most foresighted officers; at the same time affecting both the quality and production rates of weapons and equipment. The consequences included failing to concentrate on developing new weapons such as tactical combat aircraft. When Hitler and Stalin signed the non-aggression pact in 1939, about 80 percent of the Soviet Union's tanks and the majority of its aircraft were outdated and incapable of defending the homeland.



Most of Stalin's tanks were obsolete when World War II broke out.

An additional secret protocol was added to the non-aggression pact that divided Eastern Europe into German and Soviet areas of interest.



Hitler wasn't present when the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed the non-aggression pact in Moscow in 1939, but Stalin entered the room as the countries' two foreign ministers – Vyacheslav Molotov and Joachim von Ribbentrop – added their signatures.

Lion never reached the Kremlin. The reason was fear. Employees at the SVR, the Soviet Union's Intelligence Service, stated after the Cold War that the service suffered heavy losses because of so-called "oppression". This description covered extremely cruel conditions, because Stalin wouldn't stand for any opposition. Agents or intelligence officials who said anything against the Soviet leader were arrested and tortured. Many intelligence officers were shot or banished to the dreaded labour camps of the Gulag.

In 1938, Stalin liquidated almost all spies who did not have a solid cover – for example in connection with an embassy. The remaining agents dared not speak to Stalin. One exception was Ivan Proskurov, who from the beginning had warned Stalin of Hitler's future plans. The intelligence chief's career was unsurprisingly short – in July 1940 Proskurov was replaced with a more malleable candidate.

Railroad workers talked of invasion

Warnings didn't simply emanate from spies and agents. Employees of the First (Railroad) Department, a public authority charged with improving the efficiency of the railway network, reported suspicious activities from the German side of the border. For example, a report from July 1940 stated that an unusually large number of locomotives in Poland were devoted to pulling wagons filled with cement and iron. The materials could be used to build military installations that could be useful as a springboard for an attack in the east.

Later that summer, employees at the department reported an even more suspicious cargo. "In the past several days German tank units have been unloading at the Sedlets station, after which they move in the direction of the Soviet frontier", it said on 20th July. In December, the department announced that the Germans had built five airfields near Warsaw. Fuel tanks that could hold up to 50,000 litres were buried under 30 centimetres of earth.

The border troops – a unit that guarded the western Soviet border from the Barents Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south – also observed signs of an impending invasion. From the beginning of 1941 agents from the

NAME **IVAN PROSKUROV**

TITLE HEAD OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

1907-1941

Spy chief warned of attacks

Ivan Proskurov's career took off while he was an officer in the Red Army Air Force. During a meeting on flight development in 1938 the air force officer spoke his mind before Stalin had a chance to speak. Even though this behaviour was unheard of, the Soviet leader appointed Proskurov Head of Military Intelligence (RU) in 1939. As the new head of intelligence, Proskurov warned Stalin about the forthcoming German attack.

- **Was dismissed in 1940.**
- **Received death sentence in 1941.**





Communist symbols – the hammer and sickle in a star – graced Soviet officers' belts.

German military intelligence service, the Abwehr, flocked across the border. Agents came from the operation bases in Königsberg, Warsaw and Kraków, and their behaviour was suspicious.

A report on 8th January, 1941 revealed that agents had orders to "bring samples of oil, motor vehicles and aviation gasoline, and lubricants to Germany". Spies caught in the Ukraine and Belarus willingly told that they had been asked to "acquire samples of the fuels and lubricants, in use in Soviet industry and transport facilities", and the samples should be "large enough to permit analysis". Some of the agents also had Soviet currency – all clear signs that the spies were sent to test whether Soviet fuel could be used in German vehicles when the invasion began. The State Security officer who received the report saw no need to do anything drastic. "We must clarify the reason for these tasks", he noted guardedly in the margin.

Not even direct observations of tanks, military trucks and even guns a few kilometres from the border gave rise to any action from the Kremlin. When a soldier in an outpost at Przemysl in present-day Poland saw a cable for a field telephone system poking up from the banks of the River San bordering on German territory, the officer concluded that the cable must run from the German to the Soviet side.

Hitler convinced rival in letters

Although Stalin was an effective manipulator on home territory, he never became a worldly man. And Hitler exploited the fact that the Soviet leader had never been abroad and possessed very little experience of foreign policy. Historians have found letters in Russian archives from the Nazi dictator to Stalin. In the correspondence, which several experts believe is genuine, Hitler assured Stalin that he still planned an assault on Britain. The Führer swore that troop movements towards the east were because the Germans wanted to protect weapons and soldiers against possible British bombardment. "The approximately 70 divisions would be deployed along the German side of the Polish border in order to



Stalin later executed several of the politicians who surrounded the Soviet leader here at the 1st May parade.



German officers meet with soldiers of a Soviet tank unit in Poland 29th September, 1939.



The Germans met more resistance as the attack on the Soviet Union dragged on.

protect them from British bombers and intelligence services", Hitler wrote on 31st December, 1940.

The Führer had started a giant double play with his Soviet counterpart. At the same time as Nazi Germany was preparing an invasion of the Soviet Union, Hitler sent a letter to Stalin on 14th May, 1941. In the letter the Führer mentioned the risk of a random German general attacking the Soviet Union on his own. So Hitler urged the Soviet leader to ignore any German action that could be mistaken as preparation for an attack on the Soviet Union.

The letter apparently reinforced Stalin's scepticism about warnings of German preparations for an invasion. Just one month after Ribbentrop and Molotov signed the non-aggression pact in September 1939 German planes started to fly over Soviet territory. The Soviet leader saw them as reconnaissance flights, even though the planes concentrated on military installations that the Red Army had set up in its western regions.

Stalin still believed that Hitler was determined to conquer Britain, and only after that would he launch an attack on the Soviet Union. Perhaps Germans and Britons would even manage to tire each other out in a war of attrition, then the Soviet leader could invade Europe and impose communism on the Europeans. In any case, Stalin believed that the Russians had plenty of time to prepare for a German attack.

When Soviet fighters forced down a German plane on 15th April, 1941, Russian officers found a camera, some rolls of exposed film and a torn topographic map of the Soviet Union. Stalin still did nothing. And even when the Luftwaffe's machines landed on Soviet airfields, so crews could get out and look at the facilities, the dictator didn't react. On the contrary, Stalin had given soldiers strict orders not to fire on the German aircraft.

"Do not open fire. Limit yourselves to preparing a report", said the order on 29th March, 1940. "We do not direct fire from antiaircraft artillery on German aircraft in peacetime", it added. Not even news that German bombers had crossed the border on 20th June, 1941 provoked action.

Stalin went into shock

For everyone other than Stalin, it became clear that the Germans would attack the Soviet Union. Staff fled from foreign embassies with packed suitcases. A report from an agent in Paris on 21st June announced that the Wehrmacht had completed the relocation of troops to the Soviet border and would attack the Soviet Union the following day. "This information is a British provocation. Find out who the author is and punish him", noted Stalin on the paper. Then the Soviet leader went to bed and slept until early the next morning when he was awakened by Zhukov.

Betrayal and defeat struck Stalin like a slap in the face. "Hitler simply does not know about it", said the scared Soviet leader, as he sat at the green table with his closest advisers in the dawn hours on 22nd June, 1941. The dictator, who was otherwise known for his almost

morbid suspicion, had believed blindly in the German Führer only to have been cheated.

The shock overwhelmed Stalin who, in his depressed state sought refuge in his dacha. "Lenin left us a grand legacy, and we, his followers, flushed that legacy down the toilet", whimpered the Soviet leader when on 30th June he was visited by councillors, who asked him to return to work.

Four days later, Stalin had regained his composure enough to speak to the people. Now Zhukov and the rest of the nation heard a voice without hesitation. "Comrade, citizens, brothers and sisters, men of our Army and Navy! My words are addressed to you, dear friends!" the dictator thundered. "All our forces for the support of our heroic Red Army and our glorious Red Navy! All the forces of the people for the destruction of the enemy! Forward to victory!"

The gloves had been thrown down. Stalin was finally ready to put the country's formidable strength of soldiers, workers and resources into a fight against Hitler's war machine.

POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE MYSTERY

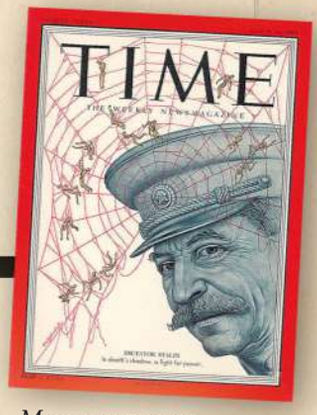
Stalin was probably convinced that Hitler would occupy Britain before the Wehrmacht attacked the Soviet Union. His advisors failed to persuade him otherwise, probably due to fear of invoking the dictator's wrath.

PERSPECTIVE

Stalin's reign of terror continued after the war

In May 1945, the Soviet leader was one of the war's major victors, but success did not soften the Stalin regime. On the contrary, as the dictator became more and more paranoid, so eventually no one in the Kremlin was safe from terror.

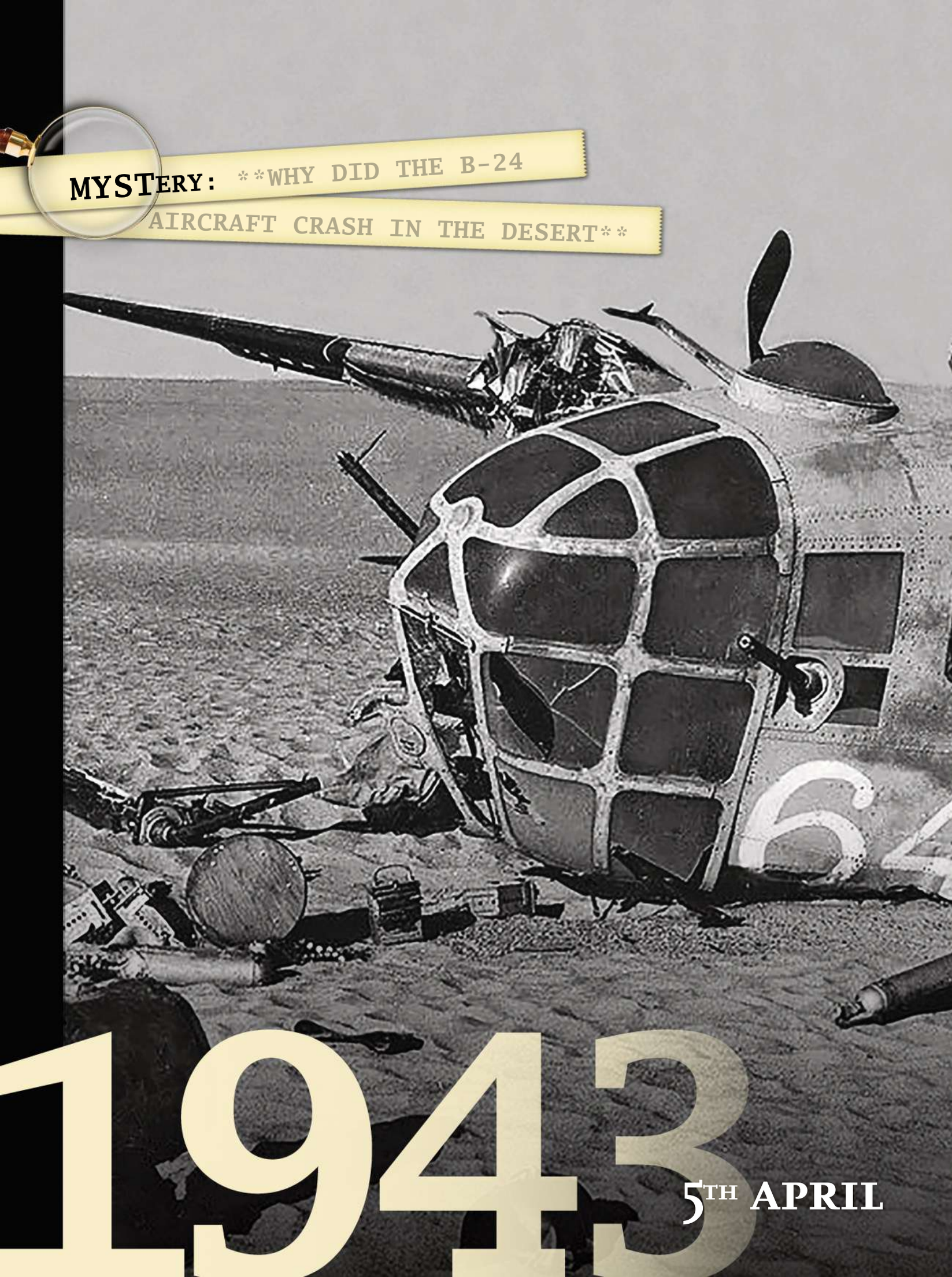
In the years after World War II Stalin suffered more and more from paranoia, and the dictator's subordinates lived in constant fear of being executed or sent to labour camps. In 1953, Stalin arrested a group of Kremlin doctors who were suspected of planning to kill a number of senior politicians. In reality, the doctors were persecuted because they were Jews – a demographic that the Soviet leader accused of being agents for the intelligence services in the United States. The Jews were then persecuted and executed in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Stalin's death probably prevented even worse atrocities. In 2011 doctor's notes revealed that for many years the dictator had suffered from severe atherosclerosis in the brain, a condition that can aggravate paranoia.



Many newspapers and magazines placed news of Stalin's death on their front covers in March 1953.



Stalin's death ended the worst period of terror in Soviet history.


MYSTERY: **WHY DID THE B-24
AIRCRAFT CRASH IN THE DESERT**
1943
5TH APRIL



Finally after 16 years, Americans found the B-24 Lady Be Good *in the North African desert.*

AIR DISASTER

FIGHTER BOMBER GOES MISSING

Extreme darkness and heavy cloud cover endangers the US bomber *Lady Be Good* as it crosses North Africa in April 1943. The pilot calls the control tower to ask for bearings from the base, but then no one hears from the B-24 again as it falls from the sky and disappears.

North Africa, 1943

THE STAGE IS SET



In the spring of 1943, the Allies defeat Hitler's armies in North Africa and set up air bases from which bombers could reach fascist Italy. After a raid on Naples a group of B-24 Liberators are returning to base in the town of Benina. All return – except one. Then the control tower receives a call from the plane.

Twelve minutes past midnight on 5th April, 1943 the radio crackled at the US air base in Benina in North Libya. From the B-24 Liberator bomber *Lady Be Good*, which was returning from a bombing raid, the pilot William Hatton asked for a bearing to the base. The call was routine and the duty officer in the base's control room did not take long to read the instrument dial on the radio equipment.

"Hello, six-four. Hello, six-four", the officer answered using the B-24's aircraft-specific identification number.

"This is Benina RDF Homer. Your bearing is three-three-zero degrees magnetic from the station. Repeat. Bearing is three-three-zero. Over and out", was the answer to Hatton's question.

"Over and out", replied the pilot, before silence descended once more upon the control room in Benina. The plane would never reach the base, however, and Hatton's voice over the radio was the last sign of life from the crew. The bomber had disappeared without a trace in the North African desert.

41-24301 was the number on Lady Be Good. The figure referred to the fact that the machine was military aircraft number 24,301, commissioned by the US government in 1941.

Plane got its name from jazz tune

About nine hours earlier the nervous and tense crew had embarked on a bombing raid over southern Italy. The plane was brand new. Due to high demand on the US Air Force during the war, US aircraft factories spat out planes in the tens of thousands, including a very large number of B-24 aircraft. In 1941 the government had ordered *Lady Be Good* and about a year later – in February 1943 –the bomber rolled from Consolidated Factory in San Diego, California. *Lady Be Good* was flown across the Atlantic to the base on Libya's Mediterranean coast, from where the plane would join the USAF's 376th Bombardment Group (Heavy) to participate in raids around the Mediterranean. The crew had previously only flown in redundant machines with frequent technical problems and so they optimistically named the new plane *Lady Be Good*, which was also the title of a popular jazz tune.

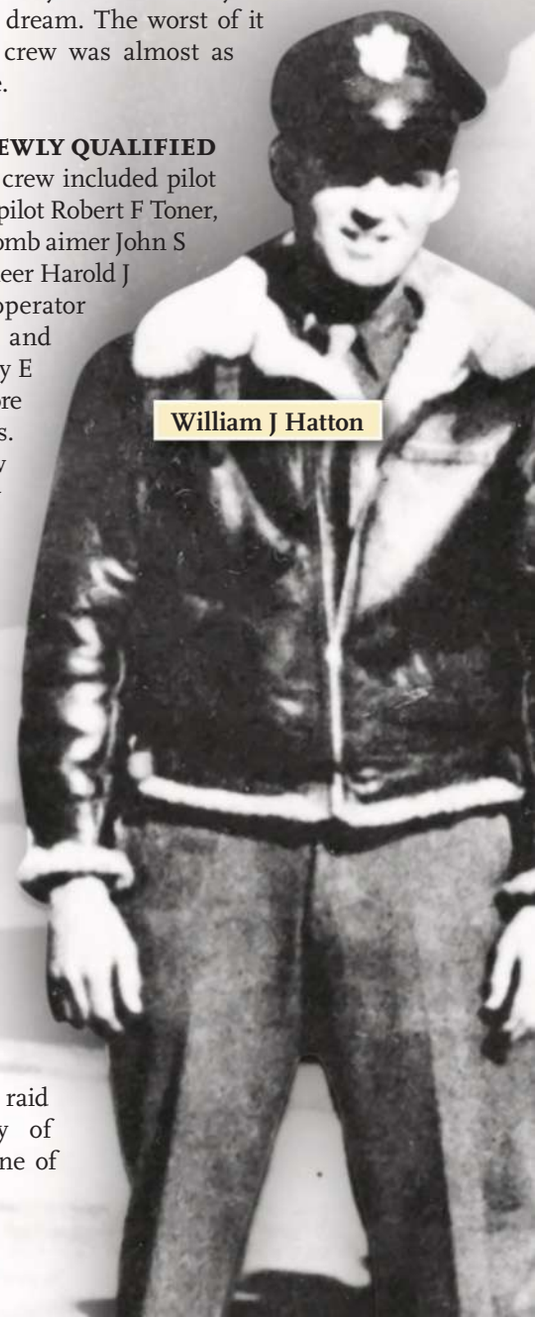
The crew had no need to worry. The plane – weighing more than 16 tonnes and colloquially called "the lady" – flew like a dream. The worst of it was that the young crew was almost as unproven as the plane.



Turbulence and very little work space made the flight navigator's job difficult.

The crew was newly qualified

The lady's nine-man crew included pilot William J Hatton, co-pilot Robert F Toner, navigator DP Hays, bomb aimer John S Woravka, flight engineer Harold J Ripslinger, radio operator Robert E LaMotte and machine gunners Guy E Shelley, Vernon L Moore and Samuel E Adams. All were relatively new graduates and totally inexperienced with conditions in the desert. The men arrived at the base in March 1943 and had to get used to the fierce heat of the day, freezing cold at night and desert sand that found its way into their ears, nose, aircraft engines and food rations. The wait, however, was short, for by 4th April 376th Bombardment Group would participate in a raid on the Italian city of Naples, which was one of



William J Hatton

the Axis's important supply ports. At 15.10 *Lady Be Good* took off in a cloud of yellowish-red desert sand, heavily laden with bombs. The mission was largely a success, but for *Lady Be Good* and the other planes that took off in the final group, the raid went awry from the start. Fine desert sand swirled up from the plane, which had just taken off, and sat in the air intake and other vital parts of the following aircraft. One by one the B-24s turned and flew back to base. *Lady Be Good* was able to carry on, but had to turn back only a few kilometres from the target due to poor visibility.

At midnight, all but two of the aircraft had returned to the airfield in Benina. Flight number 31 ran out of fuel and was forced to land in Malta. And nobody knew what had happened to flight number 64, *Lady Be Good*.

The Air Force began a rescue operation. Reconnaissance aircraft flew low over the Mediterranean, while the pilots looked for life rafts, oil spills and debris. But the search parties found nothing. The families of the crew of *Lady Be Good* soon received the announcement that their loved ones were "missing in action". 12 months later on 5th April, 1944, the message changed to "missing in action and presumed dead".

It wasn't until years later that the relatives were informed about what had happened to the crew of *Lady Be Good*.

Plane was found by chance

On 9th November, 1958 British geologist Ronald G MacLean flew over a plateau in the Libyan desert,

Lady Be Good flew too far on the homebound leg

Weather and darkness taunted the crew during the B-24's ill-fated bombing raid to Italy on 4th-5th April 1943 .

1 **15.10:** *Lady Be Good* took off from its base in North Africa and headed to the Italian city of Naples.

2 **20.52:** the aircraft abandoned its mission because of poor visibility and began the trip home toward Libya.

3 **20.53-00.11:** a strong tailwind pushed the plane faster over the Mediterranean than the crew expected.

4 **00.12:** pilot William J Hatton called base to check the bearing from the airfield and was told "330 degrees".





A week after arriving in Libya the inexperienced crew had already carried out a bombing raid on southern Italy.

about 700 kilometres from the Mediterranean coast. MacLean was employed by an oil company, and from the plane the geologist looked at rock formations that could reveal where the subsurface showed oil. Suddenly the Briton saw a plane. The aircraft was painted pale pink – a colour that WWII regulations gave to machines in desert service. On one of the wings was the US air force emblem: a white star in a blue circle. MacLean noted the position as accurately as possible.

One of his colleagues, Gordon Bowerman, found the plane three months later with substantial difficulty. But no bodies were to found at the wreck site. Bowerman carefully noted the machine's identification number – 41-24301 – and reported back to Wheelus Air Base, which was the main US base in the area. The officers at the base contacted the Department of Defense (DoD) in Washington DC, who immediately identified 41-24301 as *Lady Be Good*.

Arrows marked the path

The DoD quickly sent a team to investigate the plane and look for the crew. The search team found that the machine lay on its belly, and the hull was broken in half. The rear end of the plane was nearly perpendicular to the rest of the machine, the left wing had dug a little into the sand, and one of four engines had been torn off by the crash.

But otherwise everything was in amazingly good condition. Logbooks, clothing and chewing gum packets lay scattered around. Ammunition hung ready in belts of machine guns, a thermos of coffee was found in the mechanic's room, and the landing wheel on the right-hand side still held air. The crew members were nowhere to be found, however. The crew had bailed out before the crash, the search team presumed. But as the Americans scoured the area around the machine, they found no trace of the airmen.

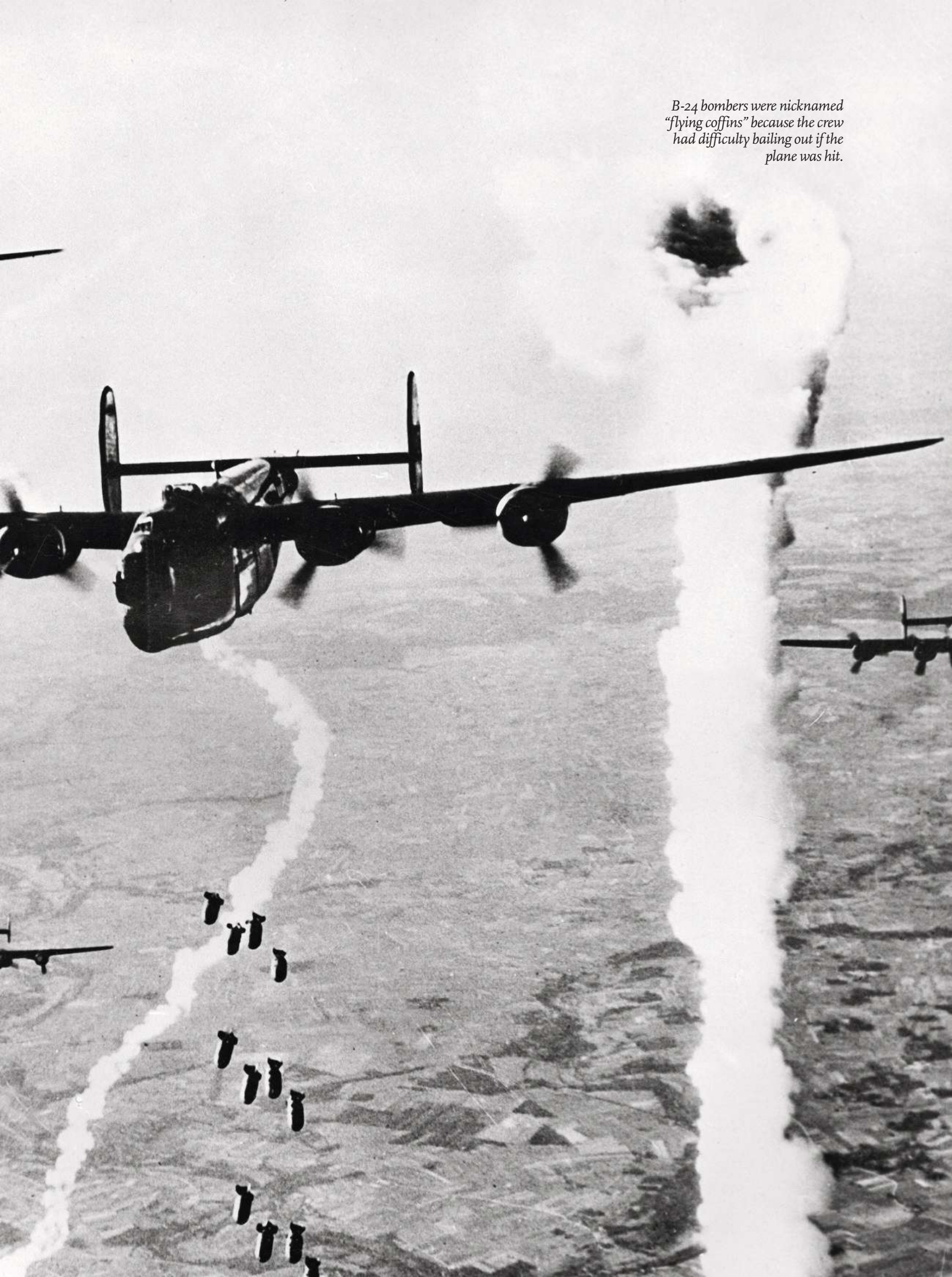
Although the plane had been found, the search uncovered more questions than it answered: where was the crew? Why were there no lifejackets when the hull was in the middle of the desert? And why was the plane several hundred kilometres south of its home base when the navigating equipment – magnetic compasses, radio compass and radio – were intact and still working?

In the sand, the search team detected traces of vehicles. An expert could quickly see that the tracks originated from Italian heavy trucks and other military vehicles from the war's first year. The vehicles had churned up loose pebbles so deep into the plateau, that the impression had not been removed by years of wind and weather. So, the tracks had already existed when *Lady Be Good* crashed, and therefore the Americans expected that the crew had followed the tracks. Hoping to find the nine men's remains the search team decided to follow the tracks.

The Americans peered over the sand from their trucks and after a while found



Logs, protractor and maps were the B-24 navigator's standard equipment.

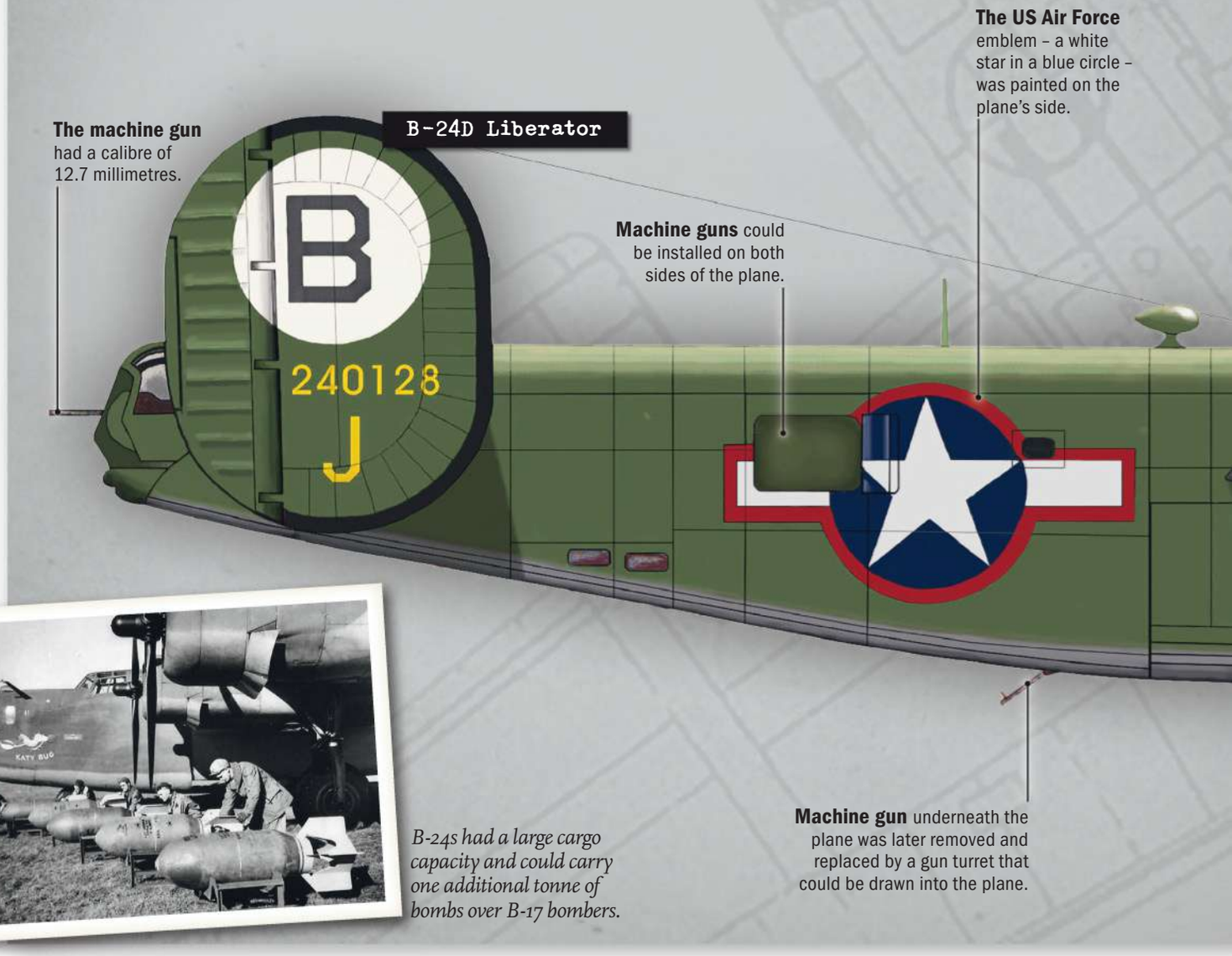


B-24 bombers were nicknamed "flying coffins" because the crew had difficulty bailing out if the plane was hit.

AIRCRAFT

B-24 was deployed worldwide

B-24 Liberator bomber aircraft flew far and fast, carried a large bomb load and were an effective submarine hunter. The Allies deployed the plane in all theatres of war – from German positions in Normandy to oil fields in Romania and Japanese-occupied islands in the Pacific.



B-24s had a large cargo capacity and could carry one additional tonne of bombs over B-17 bombers.

the first track: in the middle of the desert stood a pair of heavy boots that were so dried, the leather had cracked. "Look, they are purposely weighted down with pebbles and put with the toe touching each other and the heels apart, to form pointing north", shouted one of the men. The next day, the Americans found another clue: an arrow made of several pieces of parachute. Further down the road appeared six lifejackets. On two of the bright yellow, but now sun-bleached vests were the names Woravka and Ripslinger written in black ink.

The trail ended blindly

More arrows from parachutes appeared, while the men moved north through the burning desert. On one of the arrows was a makeshift mask with holes for eyes, cut out of the parachute in a desperate attempt to protect the face from sun and sand. The track was the last the team found after having covered 64 kilometres.

The Americans speculated: "Without water, men normally could not last more than one day in this heat – two days at the outside, even with all the water they could carry... I would say they would be fortunate to cover 40 kilometres", noted doctor James Paule, an expert in survival under extreme conditions.

The search team continued along another part of the track, but after some time the road ran out into the so-called Calanscio Sand Sea. After a three-month search the military, the relatives and the public began to adjust to the fact that *Lady*



Parachutes initially saved most of the crew of Lady Be Good.



A colourful and "personalised" image and name often graced B-24 engines' noses.

The machine gun was of the type M2 Browning.

The cockpit had room for – among others – the pilot, co-pilot and navigator.

Machine guns were placed on each side of the nose turret.

The wingspan measured 33.5 metres, and the wing area was 97.4 square metres.

Engine propellers – two on both wings – were Pratt & Whitney motors, each giving 1,200 horsepower to provide a top speed of almost 500 km/h at 7,620 metres altitude. On longer trips, the machine could fly 350 km/h on only 48 percent power.

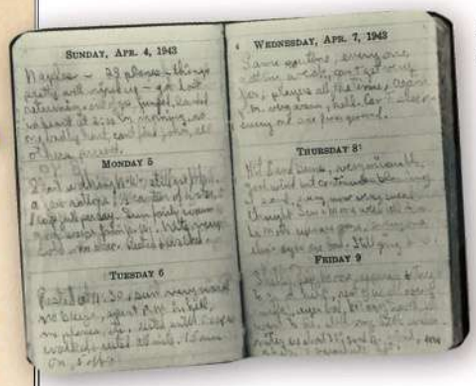
Be Good's crew had probably been swallowed by the dunes, which extended over tens of thousands of square kilometres. "The desert has taken them... and will always hold them", noted journalist Pat Frank in the weekly magazine *This Week* in October 1959.

Oil company made discovery

Four months later some people from the oil company itself returned to the military. The oilmen had found a group of bodies close to the spot where the wheel tracks of the Italian military vehicles stopped. The bodies were mummified because no bacteria could survive in the dry desert climate. A salvage team from the military were immediately sent out from the base in Wheelus.

"Against a background of jumbled dunes and desert vastness, which gave the impression of a location on the moon, were the remnants of a pathetic little camp. Five bodies were closely grouped in an area littered with canteens, flashlights, pieces of parachute fabric and harness, sheepskin-lined flight jackets, shoes, a Mae Vest [the eighth to be found on the plateau] life preserver and other readily identifiable bits of equipment and personal effects. Oilmen joined

27 tonnes
was the B-24's maximum take-off weight, making it was one of the heaviest aircraft in the world along with the British Short Stirling, Lancaster and Halifax bombers.



Diaries from the crew tell of their suffering during the walk in the desert.

the•Wheelus party in a simple but impressive prayer ceremony over the remains", relayed Walt C Wandell from the base. A sunglasses case, warped by the sun's heat, carried the name of one of the dead: Second Lieutenant DP Hays, navigator on *Lady Be Good*'s last journey.

33 kilometres further into the Sand Sea oilmen found the corpse of flight engineer, Sergeant Harold Ripslinger. And 10 kilometres further lay the remains of Sergeant Guy E Shelley, who manned *Lady Be Good*'s central machine guns.

The men could be easily identified by their personal items, including a diary, which Ripslinger had been keeping until 11th April. Also the co-pilot Toner had written a diary:

"Naples – 28 planes. Things pretty well mixed up – Got lost returning. out of gas, jumped. landed in desert at 02.00 in morning, no one badly hurt, can't find John, all others present", was the pilot's first entry.

640 metres
was the distance Lady Be Good skimmed, when she crashed in the desert. Considering that she hit the ground with no pilot, the belly landed surprisingly gently.

Men got one teaspoon of water

Using diaries and other finds investigators could piece together a fairly clear picture of events. When the crew of *Lady Be Good* had landed by parachute in the desert, the men hunted in vain for John S Woravka and then started to leave. The airmen had few rations – some sweets, a pack of gum and a few sandwiches – but still made the food stretch. On the other hand, the crew shared a single canteen, which was not even full with water. "One spoon full of water is all", recounted Ripslinger on 6th April.

Increasingly affected by heat and thirst the men walked north. But as the map did not cover the area, the airmen had no idea where they were. "Everyone getting weak, can't get very far, prayers all the time, again PM very warm, hell. Can't sleep. Every one sore from ground", wrote Toner on 7th April.

Two days later the crew reached the Sand Sea, and here some of the men gave up. Hatton, Toner, Hays, Adams and LaMotte dug in to the sand and waited for help. "Eyes bad, lost all our weight. aching all over, could make it if we had water; just enough left to put our tongue to", noted Toner on Sunday, 11th April. Next day's diary entry which was the pilot's last, was almost unreadable. "No help yet, very (unreadable) cold nite".

Ripslinger, Moore and Shelley continued northwest into the dunes. Here Ripslinger wrote his last diary entry. "Still struggling to get out of dunes and find water". Whether Moore went on is not known for his body was never found, but Shelley continued a little further, before he gave up too. The machine gunner had travelled nearly 145 kilometres, the final

Crews on the base were brave

Irritating desert sand, lack of privacy and tedious routines at the air base in Libya chipped away at the bomber crews, while poor hygiene, high temperature differences and insects increased the risk of disease.

Between bombing raids, plane crews had only a few tasks at the base in North Africa. Boredom was therefore high among men who were also bothered by a lack of privacy in the crowded tents. Sanitation did not improve camp life. The toilets consisted of holes in the ground, and soldiers only received steel helmet's worth of water for their daily hygiene needs. Diarrhoea, dysentery and jaundice were commonplace, and the sand often filled the air to irritate men's eyes. The massive difference in temperature between day and night also had an adverse effect on their health.



Maintenance and preparation of the planes was one of the routine tasks at the base in North Africa.

stretch without water. On 11th August, 1960, oilmen found John S Woravka, only 20 kilometres northeast of the wreckage of the *Lady Be Good*. The airman's parachute had only partially unfolded, and the bomb aimer had been killed on the spot.

According to Toner's diary entry, the men had been forced to bail out because the plane was running out of fuel. Since B-24 aircraft were difficult to crash land on both land and water, the men chose to jump. But parachuting also came with high risks.

Lady Be Good flew on autopilot

The B-24 only had only one exit at the rear, and with most of the crew in the cockpit – the pilot, co-pilot, navigator, radio operator, bomb aimer and nose gunner – it was difficult for them to move through the plane complete with their parachutes. The men could easily get caught up in the cabin before they got out of the machine and it was not without reason that this type of plane was nicknamed "flying coffins".

To increase the crew's chances of reaching the back of the machine, William Hatton probably put the plane on autopilot, so the machine flew straight and level. In addition to the parachutes the men were wearing life jackets, in the belief that the plane was over the Mediterranean. The plane remained in the air for some time after the crew reached the ground. But because the plane was either running out of fuel, or because more engines were switched off, the *Lady* descended and crashed in the desert.

Conjecture of the *Lady's* crash is supported by investigators' studies of the wreck. When the search team found the *Lady Be Good*, the fuel tanks were nearly empty, and the propellers of three engines were on their side. The pilot switched off the engines to save fuel and turned the propellers to reduce air resistance and help the plane fly for as long as possible. The crew knew, however, that the aircraft could not stay in the air with only one engine running, and therefore chose to jump.

The mystery of how the lady could fly so far past the base, however, was still unsolved.

POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE MYSTERY

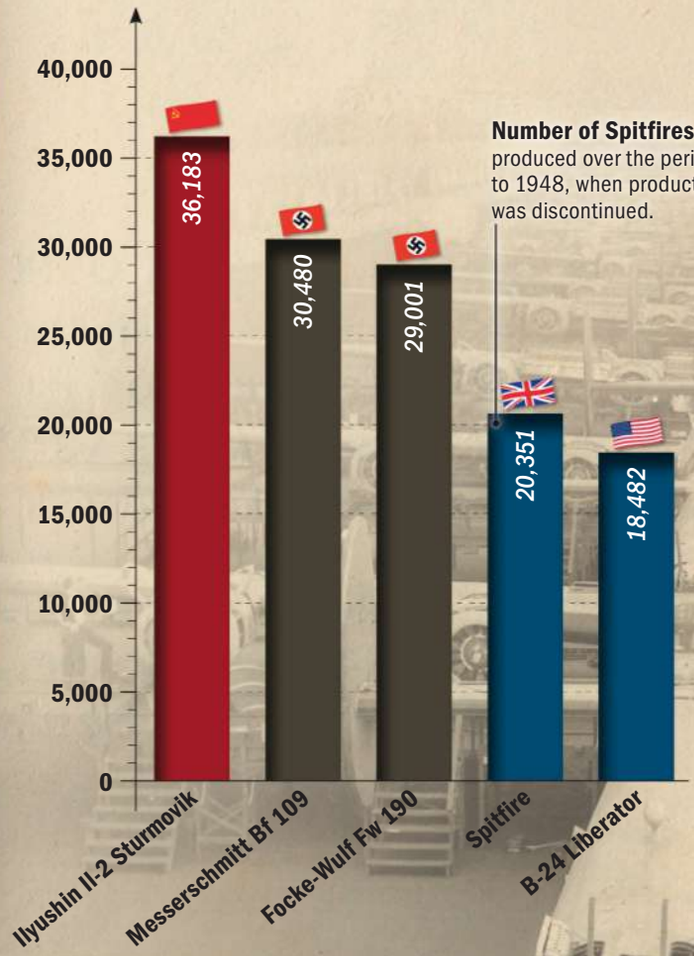
The reason why *Lady Be Good* could fly so far off course is probably a combination of weather problems, technical limitations and navigational failure. First, the weather had changed in relation to the time of departure. Without the crew's knowledge during the bombing raid, the wind turned north-east and had picked up speed. *Lady Be Good* therefore had a strong tailwind on the return trip and flew much faster south than the pilot had expected. Since both darkness and a dense layer of cloud covered North Africa, the crew also had great difficulty orienting themselves.

The radio equipment aboard the *Lady Be Good* could not distinguish whether a signal came from the front or from behind. As the base in Benina sent bearings of 330 degrees to the plane, radio operator Robert E LaMotte was not able to determine where the signal came from. LaMotte had – like the rest of the crew – not noticed that the plane had already crossed the Mediterranean and passed Benina. The radio operator probably assumed that the radio signal came from the front and the base was still ahead of the machine. *Lady Be Good* therefore continued her flight past Benina and well into the Libyan desert.

B-24 Liberator was king of bombers

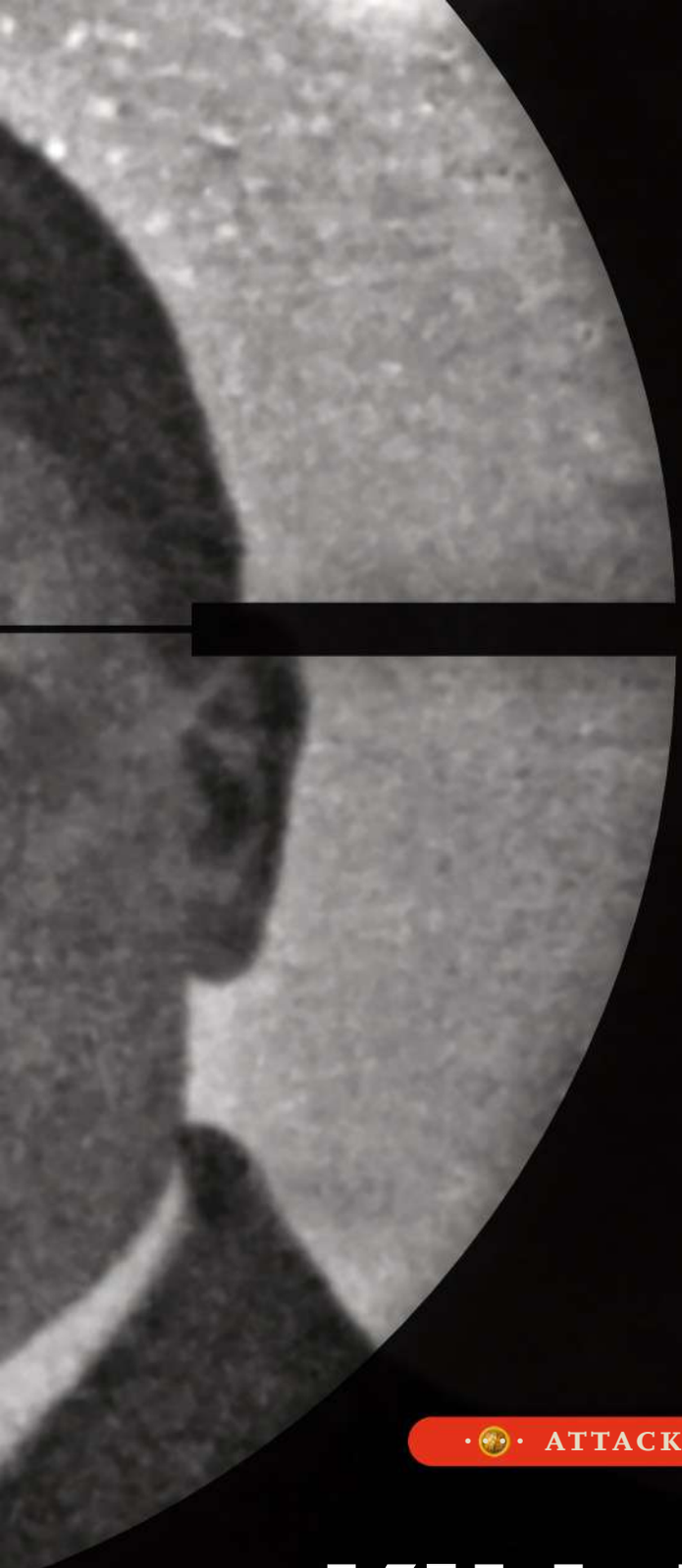
The B-24 was the most-produced bomber during World War II with 18,482 aircraft – its number was only surpassed by four other types of fighter jets.

The five most produced aircraft during WWII:



Aircraft manufacturers in the United States operated under high pressure making more than 18,000 B-24 aircraft.


MYSTERY: **WHY DIDN'T THE BRITS CARRY OUT THEIR ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON HITLER?**
1944
JUNE



The British intelligence service had Adolf Hitler in its sights, but the plan was never realised.

ATTACK ON THE FÜHRER

KILL HITLER!

In June 1944 the British capture one of Hitler's bodyguards. He reveals that the Führer likes to walk each morning alone along the same route near his villa in the South German Alps. The Brits see an opportunity to kill Hitler and end the war.

Bavaria, 1944

THE STAGE IS SET



World War II is entering its decisive phase. The Allies have just landed in Normandy, and the Red Army is pushing the Wehrmacht back on the Eastern Front. But Germany is still far from beaten, so an assassination attempt on Hitler might cause the Third Reich to disintegrate quickly. In 1944 the Brits get their chance.

"IF YOU ARE FRIGHTENED, go and guard yourself", an irritated Adolf Hitler would shout to any SS soldier he saw behind him. The German dictator hated feeling he was being watched and insisted on regular morning walks alone to get some peace. The single SS soldier assigned to escort the Führer had to follow a standing order to stay out of the angry Nazi leader's sight. However, Hitler's fixed route wound through a hilly and wooded landscape, and in his eagerness to thwart any danger, the single SS soldier often strayed too close – only to be met with rage.

For the officers in the British special espionage and sabotage unit the Special Operations Executive (SOE), this information sounded almost too good to be true when they learned about Hitler's regular walk in the summer of 1944. Not only did Hitler follow a regular routine when staying at

"The SS patrol follows [Hitler]

Report from the British Special Operations



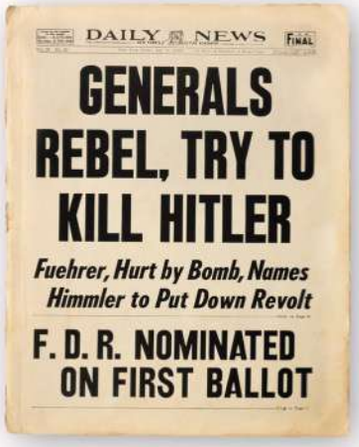
his residence in the southern German Alps, he chose to walk alone.

The news provided SOE with an opportunity to eliminate Hitler and end the war. Operation Foxley – the plan to assassinate Hitler in his private residence – was now on the drawing board.

Bodyguard gave away secrets

SOE was able to glean the information about the Führer from an SS soldier who was taken prisoner during the invasion of Normandy in June 1944. A year before the soldier had been a member of the elite guard that protected Hitler when he stayed on the Nazi mountainside retreat at Obersalzberg in Bavaria.

The mountain was scenic – just a few kilometres from the idyllic village of Berchtesgaden. It was a 30 kilometre train journey to reach Salzburg in the north and Munich was 180 kilometres to the northwest. Hitler had built a magnificent villa called the Berghof in the mountainside retreat of Obersalzberg with money he'd earned from his book *Mein Kampf*. Hitler loved to be at the Berghof where he often met with other prominent people like Luftwaffe commander-in-chief Hermann Göring and Armaments Minister Albert Speer, who also had private homes in the area.


DAILY NEWS FINAL

GENERALS REBEL, TRY TO KILL HITLER

Fuehrer, Hurt by Bomb, Names Himmler to Put Down Revolt

F. D. R. NOMINATED ON FIRST BALLOT

News about an assassination attempt on Hitler was front page news in the UK and US.

Smoke could hide mountain

SOE was well aware that the task of getting close to Hitler would not be easy. To prevent unauthorised traffic – and enemy attacks – the area was guarded by 540 specially selected SS men. No one was permitted to climb the mountain without a valid pass, and soldiers used German shepherd dogs to sniff out intruders in the forests around the Berghof.

If the enemy attacked from the air, a 300-strong unit could cover the whole Obersalzberg in artificial fog to hide the target from pilots. The unit consisted of three battalions each with 80-100 men who were spread throughout the area. Numerous anti-aircraft guns were also ready to fire at enemy aircraft. Further safety measures would see Hitler

at a discreet distance"

Executive spy and sabotage unit on Operation Foxley



One of Hitler's bodyguards (circled) was captured by the Allies and revealed many of the Führer's habits.

RESIDENCE

Assassination plan was timed and organised

British intelligence believed that assassins could exploit Hitler's habits and strike during the Führer's regular morning routine, when he walked alone and unprotected.



1 The Berghof was idyllically situated with good views of the countryside. The first building on the site was constructed around 1916, but it was completely rebuilt when Hitler bought the land in 1933.

2 The bunker entrance was close to the main building. When the war began, anti-aircraft artillery and a smoke generator to conceal the buildings were installed.

3 Göring's house was built close to Hitler. Göring and his family were often invited to dinner at the Berghof.

4 SS barracks housed the bodyguards who protected Hitler around the clock.

5 Fitness or sports hall.

6 Garage for official cars housed both private and official vehicles.

7 Teahouse lay in an idyllic spot.

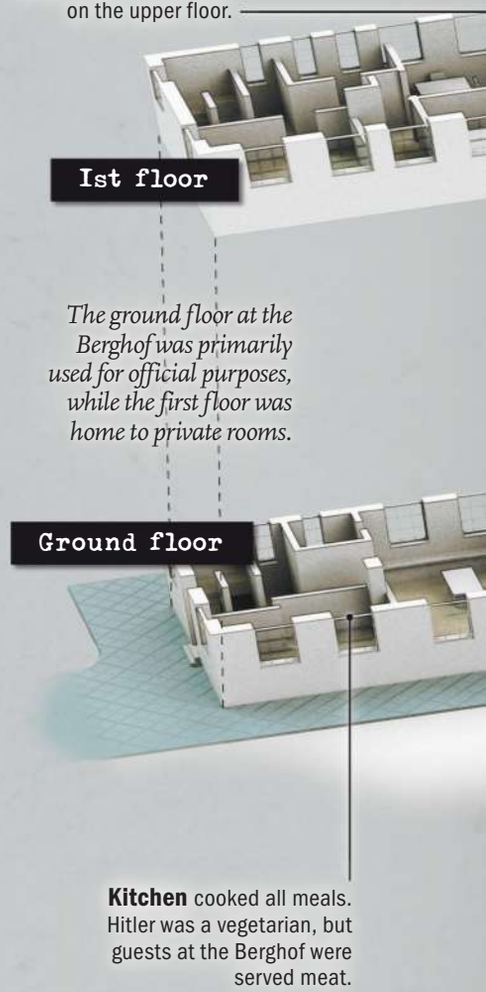


The Berghof was extended and converted into a small holiday chateau in 1935-36.

Hitler designed his own villa

Luxury villa the Berghof was furnished to Hitler's exact specifications, including adjoining bedrooms for him and his mistress Eva Braun.

The Führer's private room was at the far end on the upper floor.



The ground floor at the Berghof was primarily used for official purposes, while the first floor was home to private rooms.

Kitchen cooked all meals. Hitler was a vegetarian, but guests at the Berghof were served meat.

The Führer's day was planned in detail

Adolf Hitler's days were similar. When Hitler was at the Berghof, he followed a regular routine – which was mapped in detail by British intelligence.

09.00: Hitler never rises before 09.00; some days it's even later.



Hitler's spacious office included a three-piece suite for meetings.



Hitler took part in the Berghof's social life, but often retired to his rooms early.

Security room for SS guards existed in several places, so that the Führer could always be monitored.

Guest room

Waiter's room

Guest room

Eva Braun's room

Hitler's library

Guest room

Hitler's bedroom

Balcony

SS guard

Hitler's office, where he probably kept his famous Columbus globe.

Dining room

Terrace

Terrace

The main entrance was guarded by the SS, which provided security checks on all visitors.

Conference rooms were used for meetings about the war. Hitler had a fixed seat at the table.

The winter garden was connected to the large terrace where Hitler and his followers often stayed.



The back of a pocket watch, which Hitler gave to faithful party members.

09.30: Hitler's personal barber shaves him and styles his hair.

10.00: begins his walk to the teahouse dressed in civilian clothes. Here he takes a simple meal of biscuits and milk.

11.30: a motorcade of cars drives Hitler back to the Berghof. The Führer always sits beside the driver in the large Mercedes.

12.00: Hitler receives visitors. If the Nazi leader has high-ranking official guests, he may be driven to Schloss Klessheim to receive them, 30 kilometres away.

16.00: lunch is served at Berghof. Hitler is a vegetarian, but meat is served to others.

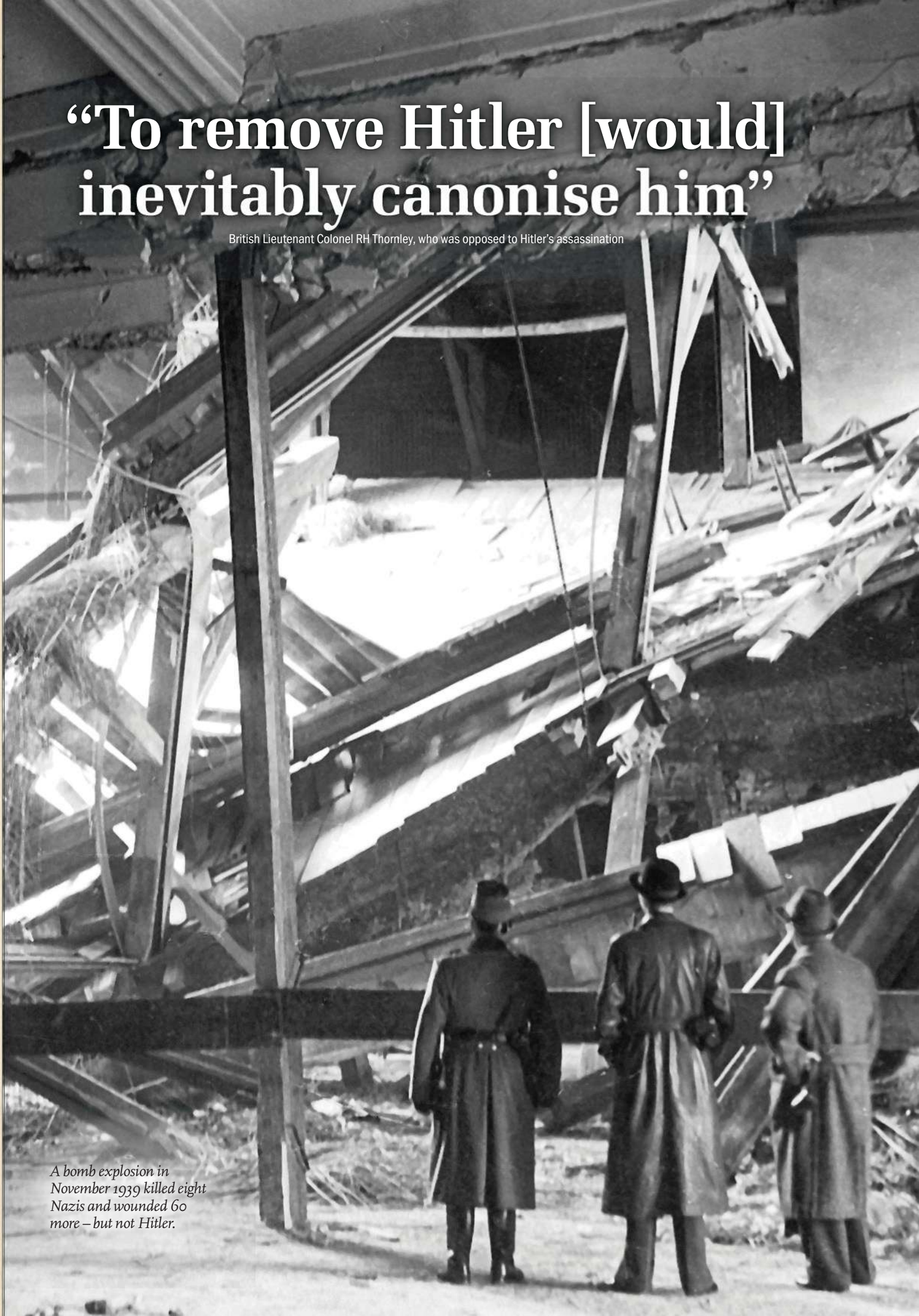
22.00: generals arrive and brief Hitler on the progress of the war.

01.00: the Führer eats dinner – often the same meal as at lunch.

01.30: Hitler sends for Eva Braun, and the couple spend a couple of hours together. The Führer goes to bed between 03.00-04.00.

"To remove Hitler [would] inevitably canonise him"

British Lieutenant Colonel RH Thornley, who was opposed to Hitler's assassination



A bomb explosion in November 1939 killed eight Nazis and wounded 60 more – but not Hitler.

immediately take cover 20 metres underground in the Berghof's huge purpose-built bombproof shelter. Several German civilians also watched the mountainous landscape alongside military guards. These sentinels insisted that no unauthorised person approached the Führer. Finally, plainclothes agents from Reichssicherheitsdienst – Hitler's personal bodyguard – stopped suspicious persons at the train station and in all hotels in the village.

Despite these massive security measures, the SOE assessed – according to the information from the former bodyguard – that Obersalzberg did provide opportunities for an assassination attempt on Hitler. The repetitive daily routine at the Berghof gave the Britons a chance to plan an assassination.

Normally, the Führer's place of residence was a well-kept secret. Hitler's travel plans were usually revealed only a few hours before departure and were subject to frequent changes. At the Berghof, nobody was in doubt when the dictator was at home – a large swastika flag was always hoisted up the flagpole on display at the front of the building.

POW was ideal assassin

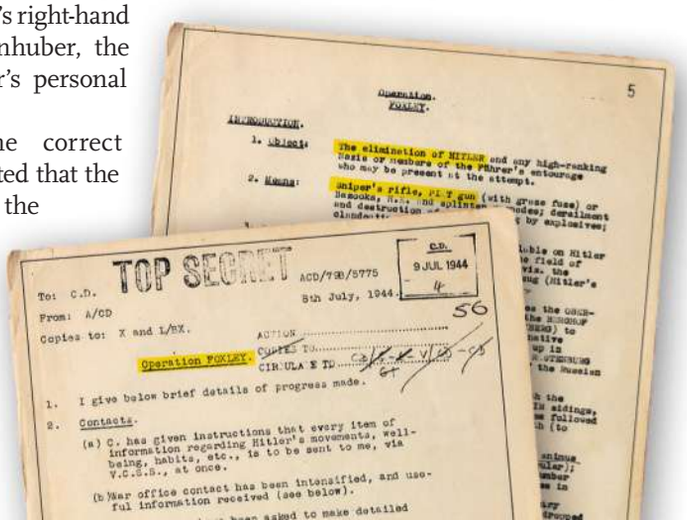
As soon as the planning for Operation Foxley was underway, the British began searching for a suitable assassin – initially among both Bavarian German and Austrian prisoners of war. The hope was to find a soldier who spoke with the proper southern German accent and who'd developed a personal hatred of Hitler. Equipped with false identity papers, a German-speaking assassin could stay unnoticed for months in Obersalzberg while studying the guards' routines and awaiting Hitler's arrival.

SOE had gone as far as selecting suitable places for the agent to stay: Trimbacher Tavern or Goldener Bär (Golden Bear) in Berchtesgaden both saw a high turnover of guests passing through.

Czech and Polish candidates were also assessed for the assassin role by SOE. The area around Obersalzberg was home to over 100,000 forced labourers from Czechoslovakia and Poland – there was even a camp for Czech forced labourers quite close to Hitler's residence. The prisoners mainly worked outdoors maintaining mountain roads and the rail network, felling trees and shovelling snow in the winter. A disguised Czech or Pole would not arouse much attention, even if the guards saw one near the Berghof.

An agent would obviously need false papers, and SOE had even found out what type of permits the foreign workers would need while staying at Obersalzberg. The passes were dark blue and marked with a stamp, where the numbering was changed every week. They usually bore a copy of the signature of either Martin Bormann, Hitler's right-hand man, or Johann Rattenhuber, the manager of the Führer's personal security service.

In addition to the correct nationality, SOE also noted that the candidate should have the qualities of an assassin. He should be courageous, resourceful, quick-thinking, patient, and – not least – willing to run a big risk during a mission that could easily cost him his life.


TOP SECRET

To: C.D.
From: A/CD
Copies to: X and L/HX.

ACD/730/5775
8th July, 1944.

C.D.
9 JUL 1944

Operation FOXLEY.

1. I give below brief details of progress made.

2. Contacts.

(a) C. has given instructions that every item of information regarding Hitler's movements, well-being, habits, etc., is to be sent to me, via V.C.S., at once.

(b) War office contact has been intensified, and useful information received (see below).

The report on the assassination of Hitler was kept classified for many years.

Alpine hunters aroused no suspicion

While one department of SOE were looking for suitable candidates for the job, other departments worked on estimates of how many men would be required, and what equipment would be needed. The experts came to the conclusion that not one, but preferably two snipers would be needed to complete the mission.

On seeing the Nazi flag displayed at Hitler's home, the two candidates – who would be dressed identically as SS- Gebirgsjäger (mountain troops) – would sneak up the Mooslahnerkopf where a small tea house stood; this café was Hitler's destination. Most of the soldiers who were admitted to the military hospital based in the Platterhof, a few hundred metres from the Berghof, were mountain

Hess would be hypnotised to assassinate top Nazis

An intelligence officer would hypnotise Hitler's former deputy Rudolf Hess and send him back as an agent within Hitler's inner circle.

In autumn 1944 the British drew up an additional plan to assassinate Hitler, which was intended to also clear other top Nazis out of the way. People like Himmler, Goebbels and Göring were on the death list.

One of the most bizarre proposals was to use Hitler's former deputy Rudolf Hess as an assassin. Hess was in British captivity, and Major LH Manderstam proposed hypnotising the mentally unstable Hess before returning him to Germany as a remote-controlled assassin.

Other intelligence officers shot the plan down and labelled Hess unfit for such an extensive task.



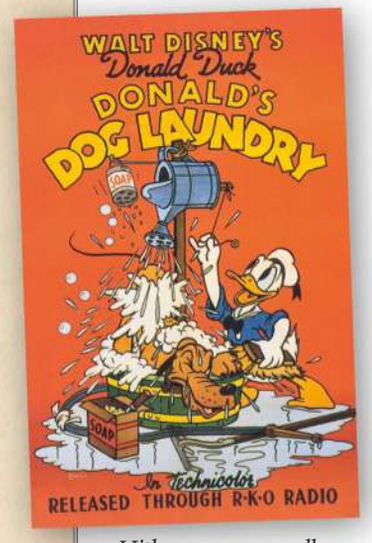
Rudolf Hess might have been able to get close to other top Nazis.



US soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division captured the Berghof in 1945, which was destroyed after intensive Allied bombing. The wine cellar remained intact, and the infantrymen took care of Hitler's wine collection. The Führer didn't drink himself, but kept the wine for guests.

troops, so this seemed to be the obvious disguise to adopt. SOE deduced that during their convalescence, Gebirgsjäger might easily walk in the area and not be suspected.

The long-sleeved uniforms were suitable as they were able to hide many items including bolt cutters – which would be used to cut through the area's wire-mesh fence – a bag of hand grenades for self-defence, a bazooka with accompanying shells, a telescopic sight and a German-made Mauser sniper rifle with exploding bullets. The ammunition contained the explosive mercury fulminate – even a small amount of which could blow off a victim's head. This meant, even if he was only hit once, Hitler's injuries would prove fatal.



Hitler was supposedly fond of Donald Duck. The films were seized from occupied countries.

Foxley met with resistance

Operation Foxley began to encounter serious opposition in the British War Department even while SOE worked under high pressure to finalise the finer details of the assassination. One of its critics was Lieutenant Colonel RH Thornley, who had initially opposed the project. One of Thornley's concerns was that the Führer's assassination might galvanise the Germans in one last furious effort to avenge Hitler, rather than weaken them. A report written by Thornley said:

"To remove Hitler from the wheel at a time when he and his fanatics have pledged themselves to defend every street and every house on German soil would almost inevitably canonise him and give birth to the myth that Germany would have been saved had he lived".

Thornley also emphasised that a postwar country, ravaged by rumours that the Germans were defeated as a result of a cowardly assassination, could give wind to the sails of other fanatics – just like the myth that Germany had been betrayed by shameless politicians during World War I. This particular myth had laid the groundwork for Hitler's ideas of a just revenge and had played an important role in bringing the Nazis to power in the first place. Therefore, any possible murder of Hitler would need to be carried out by the Germans themselves. Consideration of whether an elimination of Hitler would in fact benefit the Allied cause also needed to be made. Sir Hastings Ismay – Churchill's closest military adviser – wrote:

"The Chiefs of Staff were unanimous that, from the strictly military point of view, it was almost an advantage that Hitler should remain in control of German strategy, having regard to the blunders that he has made".

While the discussion between SOE and army chiefs went back and forth, the Allies invaded Germany itself, and Hitler left for Berlin, never to return. Planning continued for some time yet, but in reality, Operation Foxley's time had passed.

POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE MYSTERY

The fear of creating a martyr was probably what caused the British to hold back on the assassination plans. At the same time, the prospect that a more competent man – such as Heinrich Himmler – could replace Hitler, was not attractive.

Hitler had strong heirs

If Adolf Hitler had been killed, several men stood ready to succeed him as Nazi Germany's leader. Several of the candidates would probably have been more competent than Hitler.



Himmler posed as a sergeant to evade capture after the war, but was discovered and committed suicide.

IDEOLOGIST

Himmler was a steely Nazi

HEINRICH HIMMLER was commander of the SS corps and had great influence over other Nazi leaders.

■ **STRENGTHS:** his power over the SS gave Himmler good opportunities to control the country. He was brutal and ruthless thanks to his sincere belief in the superiority of Nazi ideology.

■ **WEAKNESSES:** Himmler lacked support in the military. For example, army general Heinz Guderian doubted his abilities.

ARMY CHIEF



Despite a strong defence, Göring was sentenced to death at Nuremberg.

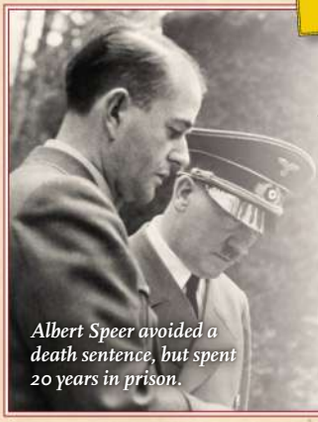
Göring enjoyed the good life

HERMANN GÖRING was leader of the Luftwaffe and was the Nazi hierarchy's second in command after Adolf Hitler.

■ **STRENGTHS:** a former fighter pilot and war hero, Göring was popular with both the military and civilian population. He usually got his way thanks to considerable charm, and was also a good strategist.

■ **WEAKNESSES:** Göring was often more concerned about food and women than politics. In addition, he was arrogant and had difficulty recognising errors.

ORGANISER



Albert Speer avoided a death sentence, but spent 20 years in prison.

Speer sparked industry

ALBERT SPEER originally trained as an architect, and with his eye for Nazi design he soon became one of Hitler's favourites.

■ **STRENGTHS:** Speer possessed unusual organisational abilities. When he became Minister of Armaments in 1942, he doubled German war production in one year. As a result, Speer was able to manage large projects without losing track and was also good at motivating employees and subordinates.

■ **WEAKNESSES:** the architect lacked military education and had no experience in leading troops. In addition, his connections to both the party and the SS were weak.

SOLDIER

Dönitz became president by chance

KARL DÖNITZ was Grand Admiral in command of the German U-boat forces and later the entire navy. Hitler appointed Dönitz his successor in his political testament with the title of Reich President because the Führer viewed him as one of the few who'd remained loyal to him and Germany.

■ **STRENGTHS:** Dönitz was known as a hardworking and skilled officer who had worked all the way up through the naval hierarchy. The admiral enjoyed great respect among his subordinates, partly because he knew all U-boat captains and sent telegrams to new fathers in the submarine fleet. Dönitz was also pragmatically tuned with a well-developed sense of what was possible.

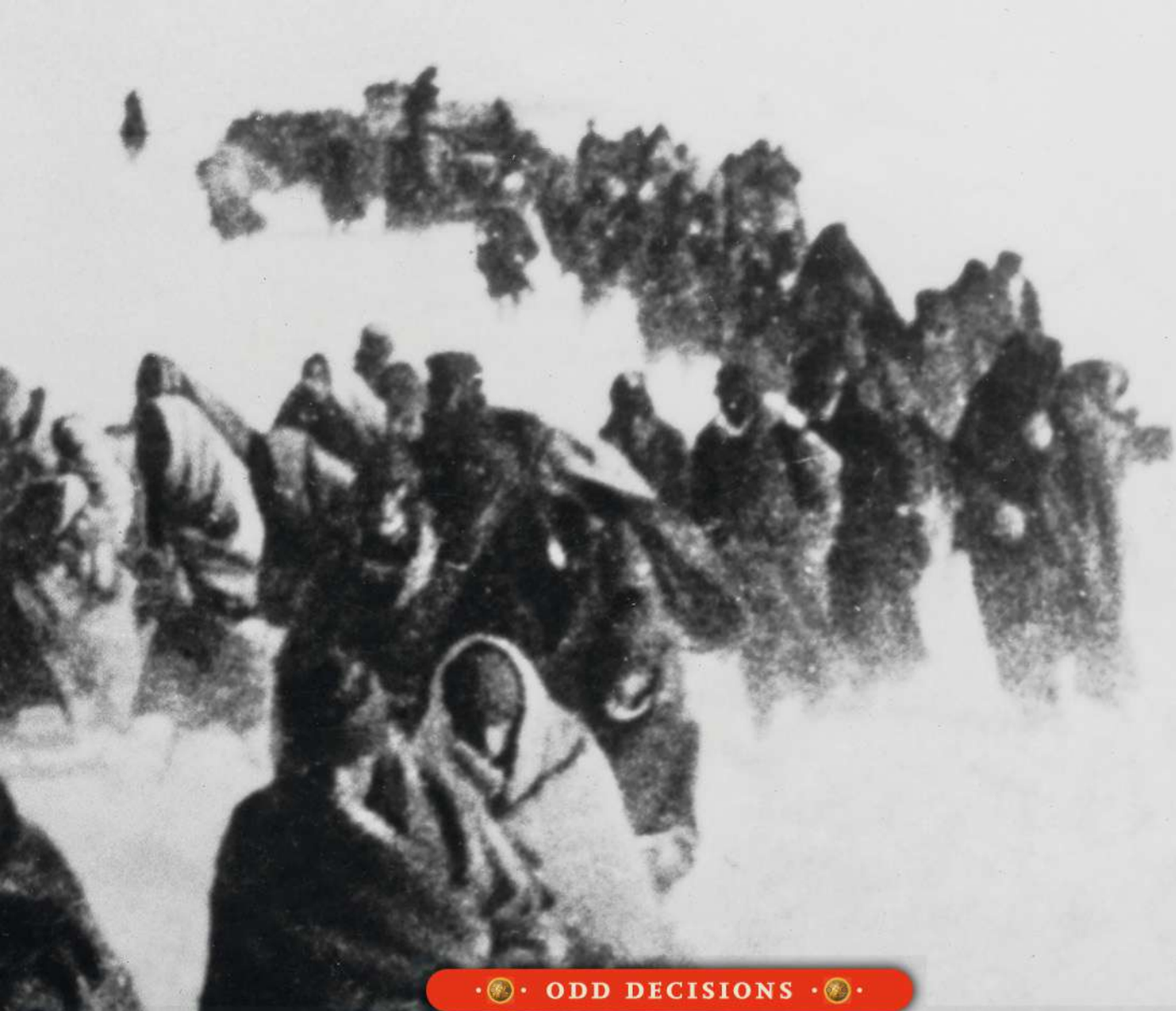
■ **WEAKNESSES:** Dönitz was primarily a military man and had only limited experience in political manoeuvring. At the same time the admiral lacked public support.



After the war, Dönitz was sentenced for war crimes and served 10 years.



Hitler's campaign in the Soviet Union *became a nightmare. Better planning and the deployment of proper winter equipment might have seen Moscow captured.*



ODD DECISIONS

WAR DETERMINED BY DISASTROUS DECISIONS

World War II could have easily taken a different course if generals and heads of state had kept their cool at the right time. Both sides made spectacular blunders that could have been avoided. Civilians also made hard choices.



The eastern campaign froze *when the Wehrmacht invaded the Soviet Union without proper winter clothing. Soldiers had to endure temperatures 40 degrees below zero on the Russian steppes.*



Civilians chose to commit suicide *in desperation at the Third Reich's downfall and in fear of Red Army reprisals. In Vienna (pictured) a father killed his family before he shot himself.*

GERMANY

Hitler went to war with the world

Germany was a formidable power in the late 1930s. The army possessed skilled officers and loyal soldiers, the country had a well-oiled industry, and virtually the entire population was prepared to follow their Führer's lead. But after Germany swept across western Europe at the beginning of war, success went to Hitler's head.

The dictator believed the Soviet Union could be overcome within weeks, and so he failed to equip the army with adequate winter equipment. Previously, Hitler missed a chance to break Britain when he ordered the Luftwaffe to bomb civilian targets rather than continue its fight against the RAF. And when Hitler declared war on the US, he effectively signalled Nazi Germany's final surrender. Suicide became the only option for both him and some of his people.



Hitler declared war on the United States *after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Had the Führer stayed his hand, the US would probably have entered the war much later – or even not at all.*

Anger over Nazi terror bombings of London *was exploited by British propaganda.*





In 1940, Hitler switched focus to bombing civilian targets *in Britain, especially London. The Luftwaffe had been successfully attacking RAF airfields at the beginning of the Battle of Britain, but by changing tactics, the dictator only served to strengthen Britain's will to fight.*



Women who slept with the enemy *had their heads shaved and were often driven through the city in full public view, such as here in Montélimar in France. Some had simply become infatuated with enemy soldiers, while others aimed to trade sex for benefits from the occupying forces.*



Honorary medals were awarded *to those who participated in the raid on Dieppe. Many were given posthumously.*

MYSTERY: **WHY DID BRITAIN ATTACK DIEPPE?**

On 19th August, 1942 over 6,000 Allied soldiers sailed *to Dieppe on the Channel coast. But the raid proved fatal when German defences proved surprisingly strong, and few installations were destroyed. During the day 3,000 men were killed, wounded or taken prisoner.*

THE ALLIES

Western powers underestimated the enemy

As a result of its experience in World War I, France built a heavily fortified defensive line against Germany in the 1930s: the Maginot Line. The French felt safe behind the barbed wire and turrets, but their generals had completely miscalculated a modern army's strength. In the space of just days, German armoured divisions drove through and around the line.

Later in the war, Allied commanders refused to believe that German defences at Dieppe were sufficient and launched a disastrous raid on the city.

Judgment was perhaps not the strongest quality among those women in occupied countries who took German soldiers as boyfriends. After liberation came punishment in the form of humiliation and exclusion.



"They shall not pass" *read the inscription on the Maginot Line's logo. The message soon sounded hollow.*



King George VI is shown visiting the Maginot Line, *which France relied blindly on. But the defences proved worthless when Germans broke through the line or bypassed it by diverting through Belgium.*



In 1942 a lone Japanese submarine *near Los Angeles attacked to little effect.*

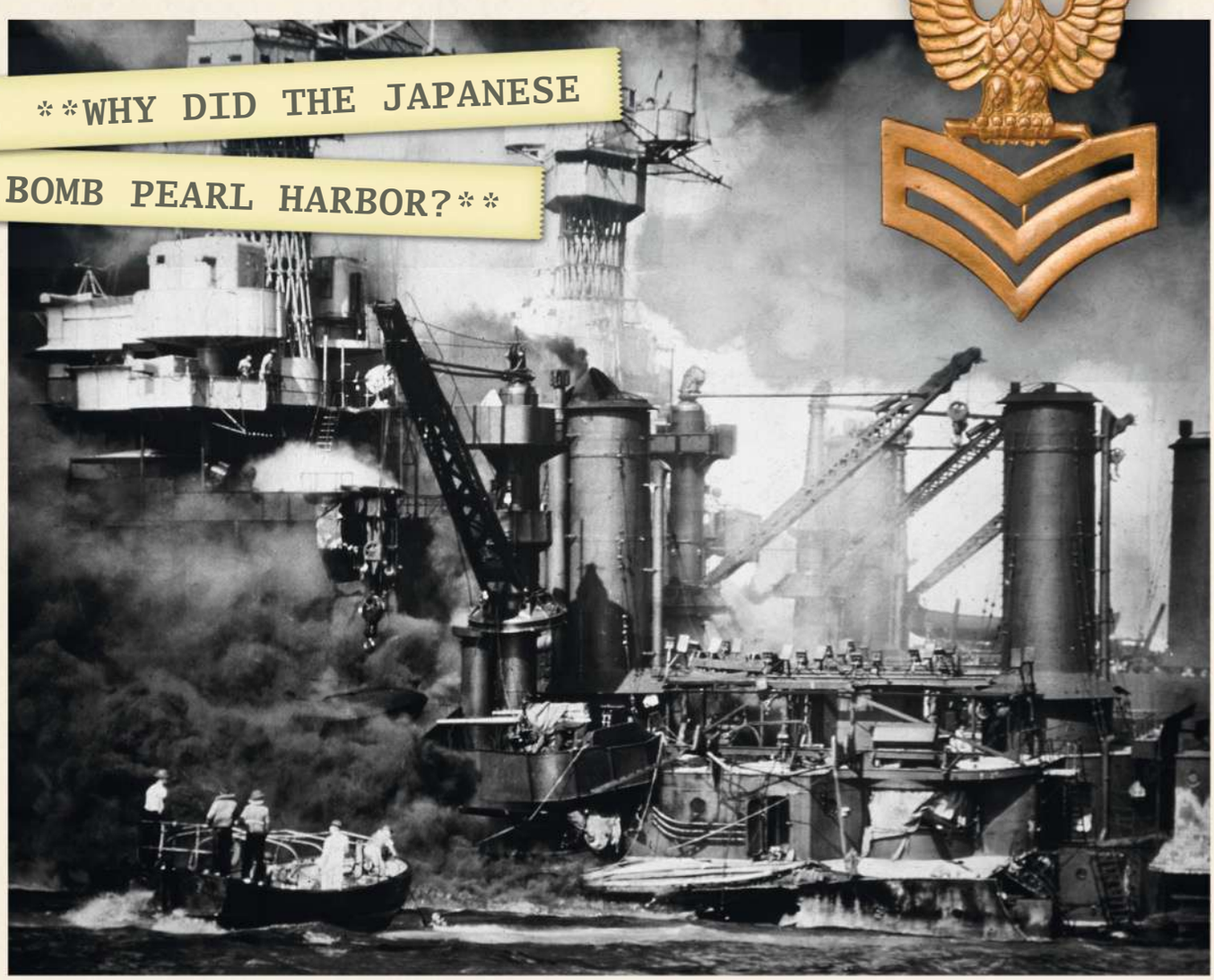
JAPAN

Japanese generals would paralyse the United States

Japan had been at war with China since 1931 and had occupied the country's main regions. The emperor planned to build an extensive empire across East Asia but feared interference from the US. If America's fleet could be eliminated once and for all, Japanese commanders reasoned, they'd have a freer hand. The result was the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

But instead of removing a threat Japan had awakened a dormant giant. The US wanted revenge, and once its industry had shifted up a gear, Japan's fate was sealed. The war ended with massive Japanese military and civilian casualties – some self-inflicted, as individuals preferred to throw themselves to their death from the cliffs rather than be captured by the Yankees.

The American eagle graced a petty officer's *rating badge in the US navy.*

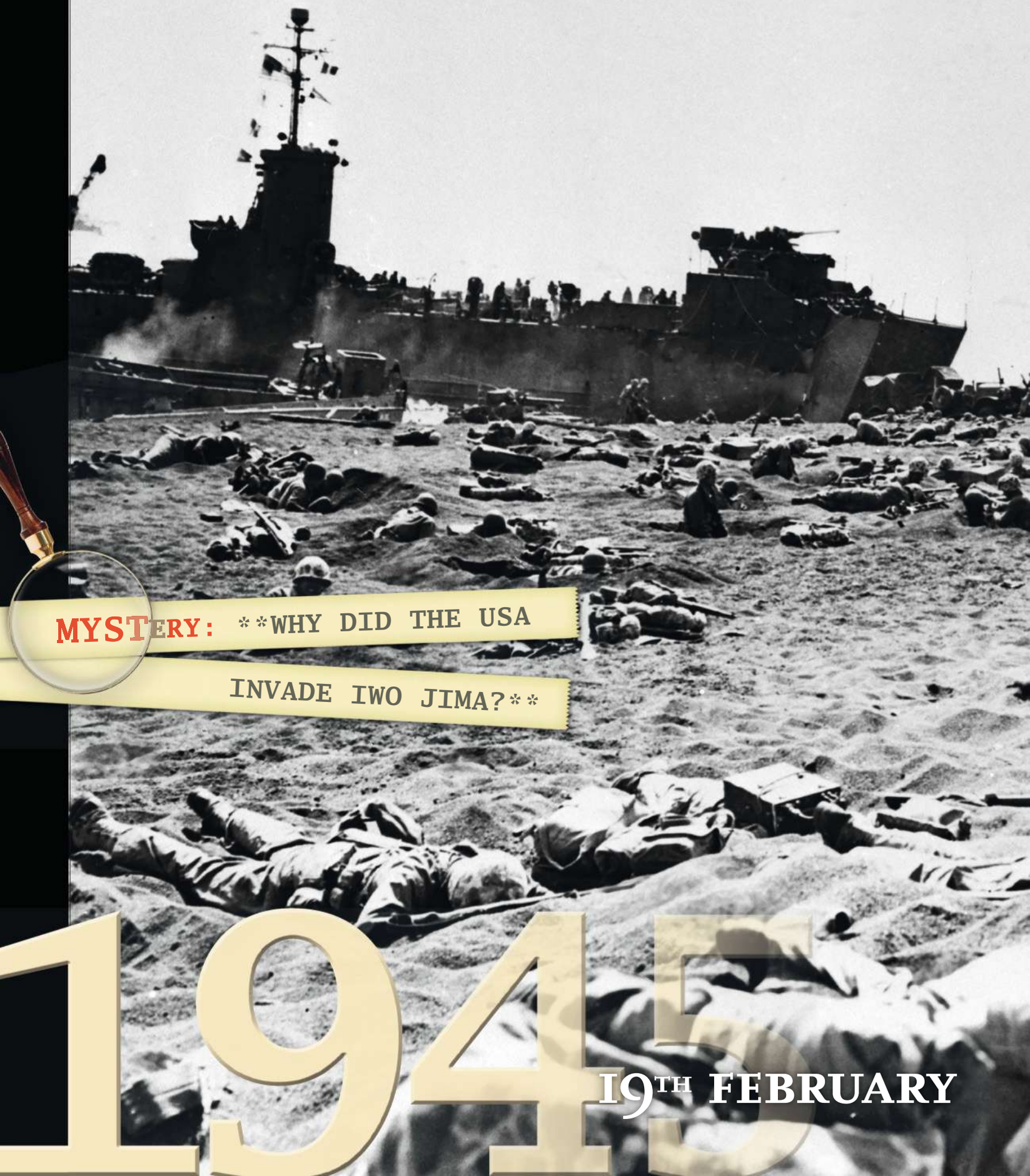


The attack on Pearl Harbor was devastating on US battleships, *but the Japanese soon regretted the decision. The navy's large aircraft carriers weren't in port on 7th December, 1941 and became the backbone of the Pacific Fleet, supplemented by newer vessels from US shipyards.*



Japanese threw themselves *from the so-called Suicide Cliff after the US invasion of Saipan in 1944. Both civilians and soldiers preferred death to being captured by the Americans, who were notorious for murdering and raping prisoners – according to Japanese propaganda.*

Dead and wounded soldiers lay everywhere on the beach as their comrades tried to return Japanese fire.



MYSTERY: **WHY DID THE USA INVADE IWO JIMA?**

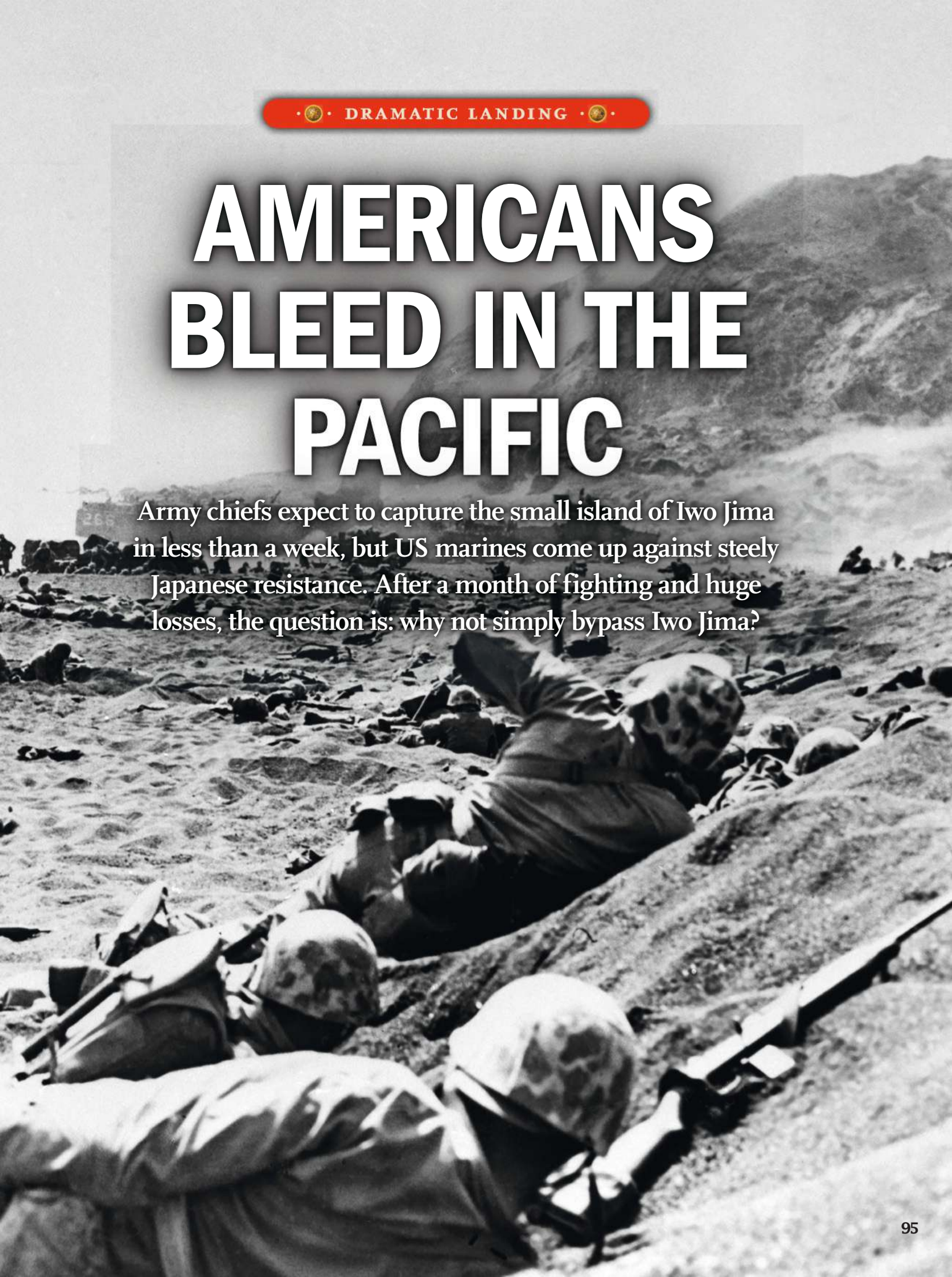
1945

19TH FEBRUARY

DRAMATIC LANDING

AMERICANS BLEED IN THE PACIFIC

Army chiefs expect to capture the small island of Iwo Jima in less than a week, but US marines come up against steely Japanese resistance. After a month of fighting and huge losses, the question is: why not simply bypass Iwo Jima?



Iwo Jima, 1945

THE STAGE IS SET



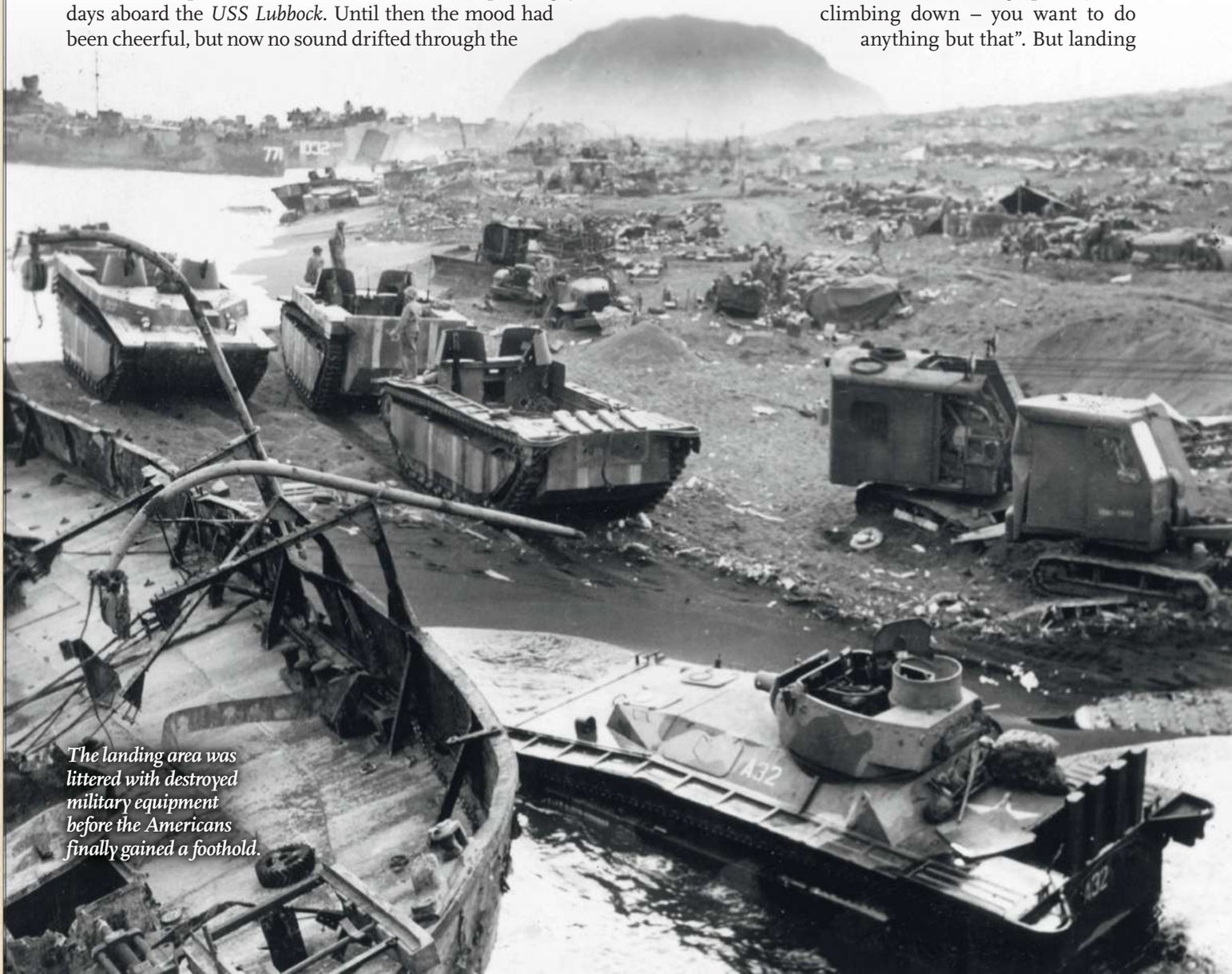
In the spring of 1945, the Allies tackle the prospect of invading the Japanese mainland. Generals believe that aircraft from the Japanese base on the tiny Pacific island of Iwo Jima present such a threat it must be captured. After prolonged bombardment, the marines are ready to go ashore on the morning of 19th February.

Jim Naughton and John Douglas silently watched the morning sun's first rays light up the sky over Iwo Jima. The two enlisted privates from the 28th Marine Regiment's H Company had been up since 03.00 – like everyone else on the attack transport *USS Lubbock*, they'd been preparing for landing on the small Japanese-occupied volcanic island in the Pacific. The marines now stood ready on deck with full packs and loaded rifles.

19-year-old Naughton had never seen his comrades so quiet. Some prayed silently, others checked their rifles and a few took the last draw on a cigarette. For months the marines had trained for amphibious attacks on Hawaii before spending 42 days aboard the *USS Lubbock*. Until then the mood had been cheerful, but now no sound drifted through the air. At 6.40 the silence was broken by the first shells from the warships, and while the bombardment raged, the soldiers received the signal to board the Higgins boats that had been lowered into the water by crane earlier that morning.

When Douglas clambered down the unstable netting to the landing craft, he realised that from now on everything would be foreign. The moment he let go of the rope he would be leaving the last safe environment behind him and preparing to arrive in a place where he "had no idea of anything that was going to happen to me".

Naughton too, was feeling anxious climbing down to the boat: "You'd like to be climbing up, but you're climbing down – you want to do anything but that". But landing



The landing area was littered with destroyed military equipment before the Americans finally gained a foothold.

is what he and his comrades had been trained and ordered to do, so there was no way back.

In all, nearly 30,000 US marines were ready to invade Iwo Jima on 19th February, and another 50,000 were ready to be inserted later. When viewed from the landing boats, the tiny black spot a kilometre away seemed a straightforward target, but the solders had been warned the invasion would cost many lives. The marines just hoped the volcanic island would be worth it.

Iwo Jima was a springboard to Tokyo

Plans for invading Iwo Jima circulated among US general staff as early as autumn 1944. After recent success in the Philippines and the Mariana islands, the volcanic island was considered an annoying little roadblock that – according to several army chiefs – could disrupt the offensive against Japan itself.

The Americans had begun to send the giant B-29 Superfortress bombers on raids against Tokyo and other major cities, but a primitive radar station on Iwo Jima gave the Japanese warning of their coming. At the same time, the tiny island – just 21 square kilometres – had two runways, with a third under construction. From here, Japanese planes could attack ships, B-29s and US-occupied territory in the area. The solution was simple for the general staff, led by Fleet Admiral Chester W Nimitz and Admiral Raymond Spruance: Iwo Jima had to be taken so the Americans could use the island as a base for its own fighter aircraft.

Back in Hawaii, solders like Naughton and Douglas prepared themselves for the amphibious assault codenamed Operation Detachment. In addition to the usual marching and shooting exercises, the recruits were specially trained to attack secure positions. In a series of exercises, the soldiers had to battle up the mountains in Hawaii, which resembled the high terrain of Iwo Jima. Surveillance photos of the volcanic island showed the Japanese were well into the process of excavating defensive positions, particularly on Mount Suribachi.

The surveillance pictures also worried General Holland M Smith, who led part of the marine corps. The bespectacled, short-tempered "Howling Mad" Smith was convinced the taking of Iwo Jima would cost an enormous number of lives. The enemy had time to thoroughly prepare its defences and would no doubt fight desperately, he informed Admiral Spruance, who had overall responsibility for the invasion.

"This left certain doubts in my head as to whether Iwo Jima would be worth what it cost us", Spruance admitted after the war.

Underground fort was built

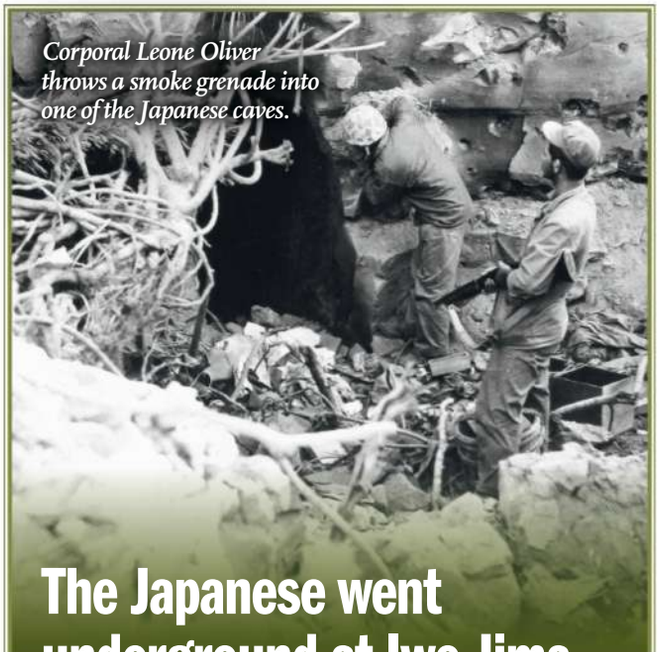
General Smith was correct in assuming the enemy would not simply give up Iwo Jima. As Americans trained in Hawaii, activity was hectic both above and below the dark surface of Iwo Jima. 53-year-old Tadamichi Kuribayashi was responsible for the Pacific island's defence, and the gifted general had already begun to transform the volcanic island into a unique subterranean fortress in the summer of 1944.

Korean slave workers had been shipped to Iwo Jima, and together with expatriate Japanese, the Koreans toiled from dawn to dusk. The sounds of picks and shovels filled the air as workers dug into the island's interior. As they dug deeper, hoists had to be used to remove the stone, mud and sand. On the surface, men in long rows were ready to carry tonnes of soil and rocks away. Parts of this material was mixed with cement and used to reinforce the underground corridors.

The effort paid for itself because when the US bombardment began in February 1945, Kuribayashi's 21,000 soldiers protected themselves in an ingenious system of caves and tunnels that led to a large number of openings, hatches and gun emplacements.

"The bombardments continued without a break, but we were able to endure", recalled Ensign Kiyoshi Endo, who along with his fellow men sat safely underground for nine days as US aircraft dropped tonnes of bombs on Iwo Jima.

In the US camp, generals and soldiers were extremely pleased with the massive bombardment prior to the invasion – it was the biggest of the war so far. When the warships sent a further hail of shells on the morning of 19th February, the Americans doubted whether any



Corporal Leone Oliver throws a smoke grenade into one of the Japanese caves.

The Japanese went underground at Iwo Jima

18 kilometres of tunnels allowed the Japanese to attack from anywhere. Defenders would emerge from hidden holes, fire and quickly flee.

Nine months before US forces attacked Iwo Jima, the Japanese began excavating a colossal underground defence network, which was the main reason the occupation took so long to complete.

Underground passages branched off throughout most of Iwo Jima and were reinforced with cement, so the network could withstand bombardment from ships and aircraft. Some tunnels were more than 20 metres underground. The tunnel system also contained stocks of ammunition and food, temples where soldiers could pray, and small field hospitals.

1,5 metres
was the height of the underground tunnels, so even shorter Japanese soldiers had to duck their heads. The width of the corridors was also 1.5 metres.

Invasion became an obstacle race

Dogged Japanese troops defended Iwo Jima from caves and tunnels for over a month – and took almost 7,000 American lives. In return for their exertions and heavy losses, the US forces gained control over Japanese runways and could establish new ones on the island.



Its location between Japan and Guam in the Mariana Islands meant the 21 km^2 volcanic island of Iwo Jima was used by US bombers for emergency landings.

4 Flag raised on mountain

23rd February: after five days of fighting at Mount Suribachi, US marines hoist the Stars and Stripes on top of Iwo Jima's highest peak. Photographer Joe Rosenthal is on the spot to take one of the war's most iconic images. Rosenthal will subsequently be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the image.



Joe Rosenthal's photo became a symbol of Iwo Jima and the war.

3 Soldiers cut off Mount Suribachi

19th February, 18.00: soldiers from the 28th Marine Regiment reach close to Iwo Jima's opposite shore, establishing a front line north of Mount Suribachi.

Evening on Day 1
Americans cut off the Japanese positions on Mount Suribachi.

2 Troops go ashore

19th February, 08.59: one minute before the designated H-Hour, the first Higgins boats carrying marines reach Iwo Jima's black sands on its south-facing beaches. 30,000 out the operation's 82,000 participants go ashore during the day.



Troops hauling supplies ashore on the beach. Ahead lay four weeks of heavy fighting.



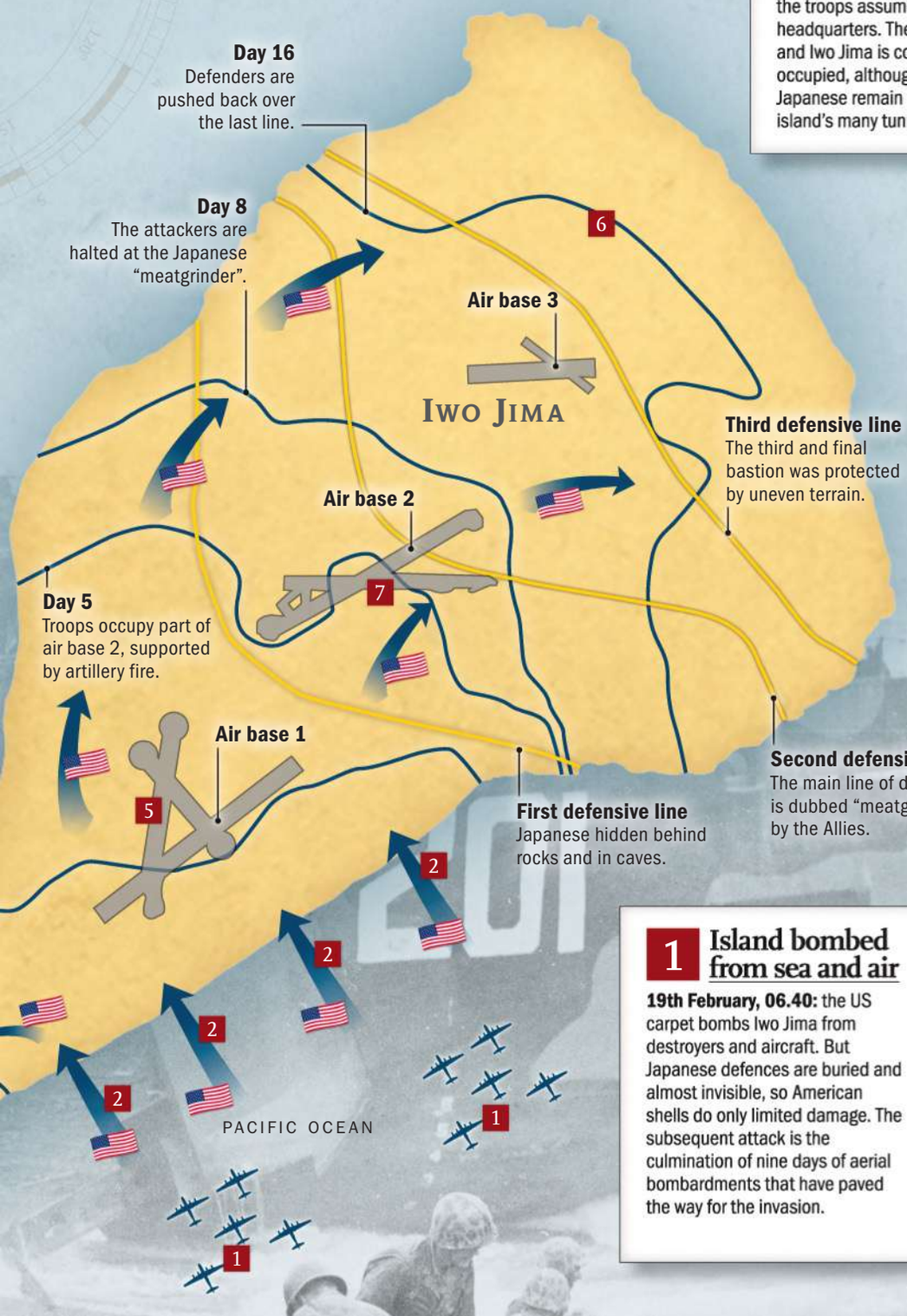
5 Americans capture runways

6th March: the first air base on Iwo Jima is secured to the degree that Americans dare to land by air on the island. 28 P-51 Mustang and 12 P-61 Widow planes arrive during the day.

The 5th Marine Division suffered the most casualties with over 1,000 killed and 3,000 wounded.

6 Headquarters blown up

26th March: US forces reach what the troops assume is the Japanese headquarters. The cave is destroyed and Iwo Jima is considered occupied, although pockets of Japanese remain hiding in the island's many tunnels and caves.



7 Air base is operational

5th April: the Americans establish an air base on Iwo Jima. American bombers can now land halfway between the Marianas and the Japanese mainland.



A US B-29 bomber with engine problems crash-landed on one of the captured runways.

1 Island bombed from sea and air

19th February, 06.40: the US carpet bombs Iwo Jima from destroyers and aircraft. But Japanese defences are buried and almost invisible, so American shells do only limited damage. The subsequent attack is the culmination of nine days of aerial bombardments that have paved the way for the invasion.



Landing craft carrying thousands of marines approached the island under cover of bombing.



Tadamichi Kuribayashi was posthumously awarded the Order of the Rising Sun.

Japanese had been left alive on Iwo Jima. Soon, however, consideration would have to be given as to whether any had been killed at all.

The beach was like quicksand

By the time Jim Naughton, John Douglas and the rest of H Company approached Iwo Jima's dark beach, the first US forces had already come ashore and the beach was already littered with death and destruction.

"As soon as the Higgins boat hit the deck and the gizmo went down, I look and see all the junk and everything. I said, 'Holy Christmas, this place is something else, this is going to be something'", remembered Charles Johnson, another private in H Company.

Johnson raced out of the landing craft with Naughton and Douglas, after which the men moved in different directions as they'd been taught during training in Hawaii. Each man zigzagged away from the debris of bombed landing craft and dead countrymen, but every metre proved a battle with Iwo Jima's volcanic sand.

"This terrible sand was very coarse and loose, you just went practically down to your ankles in it, and it's always tough to run", Naughton recalled.

Another soldier from H Company described the sand as like "coffee grinds" and Douglas in particular was pushed down into the heavy surface. The marine was equipped with a Browning machine gun and 30 magazines weighing a combined 30 kilograms. The weight sucked him down almost as if the 19-year-old were running in quicksand. Douglas was forced to lay on his stomach and crawl forwards as he watched the sand around him spit upwards from enemy machine gun bullets.

Shells from the hidden Japanese gun emplacements rained down on the beach, "throwing sand, water, and even pieces of human flesh 100 feet into the air", an American war correspondent reported. Wounded marines desperately tried to staunch their bleeding until help came, but for many time ran out.

Both Naughton and Douglas managed the trip from the beach to the five-metre-high sandbank without getting injured. Behind the sandbar the solders found shelter from enemy bullets, but soon the marines discovered the most dangerous passage of all awaited – a barren, burnt plateau where the Japanese had a clear view of the enemy from their numerous hiding places.

"They could see us, but we couldn't see them", recounted Douglas, who along with his comrades had to zigzag forward while shells, mortar fire and bullets flew over their helmets. Help from amphibious vehicles was long in coming, as they couldn't pass the sandbar on the beach before bulldozers had levelled the terrain.

For Douglas, the advance felt like going into a shooting range. Losses on the plateau were huge as the Japanese, thanks to their underground tunnel system, could emerge behind the advancing Americans.

Despite fierce resistance, H Company and the rest of the 28th Marine Regiment achieved their target on the first day of the invasion. As the sun went down, the soldiers had almost reached Iwo Jima's opposite shore, cutting off Mount Suribachi on the southwest peninsula from the rest of the island. Ahead lay the mountain, and the next goal was to capture the extinct volcano. But Suribachi's interior still smouldered – hidden in caves and tunnels, the Japanese inside the volcano were ready to breathe fire.

Three of the six US soldiers who raised the Stars and Stripes on Mount Suribachi on 23rd February, 1945 died in combat a few days after it was captured.

The flag was raised on Mount Suribachi

The men of H Company did not sleep much that first night, when everyone had to constantly be on guard against Japanese sneak attacks in the dark. At the same time, soldiers were left to their own thoughts. Friends and compatriots were dead, and everyone knew after the first round of heavy fighting that the generals' estimate that Iwo Jima would be taken in five days had been wildly optimistic.

While the soldiers scooped up their field rations, the guns glowed on the naval ships. Mount Suribachi was shelled until 08.30, when Douglas and the rest of the men in the 28th Marine Regiment laced their boots and advanced towards the mountain. It quickly became clear, however, that the imperial army's defences were as strong as they'd been before the bombing. Japanese shells were fired from more than 100 small nests on the mountainside and each metre advanced was gained at a cost of several dead and wounded Americans.

"We were three days going across a thousand yards. It was just a miserable slow process", recalled Douglas.

Sherman tanks rolled forward in front of the marines in an attempt to take out the nests, but with only tiny windows the shooters were practically firing blind. Infantrymen were forced to run behind the tanks to guide them towards targets using telephones mounted on the back of the tanks.

H Company's Bill Nicholas learned first-hand how difficult the task was. After three gruelling days on Mount Suribachi, he was ordered to assist a tank on 23rd February. Nicholas had just put the phone to his ear when a Japanese mortar exploded behind him. Shrapnel cut into the 19-year-

NAME **TADAMICHI KURIBAYASHI**

TITLE GENERAL AND DIPLOMAT

1891-1945

Samurai's son worked in US

Tadamichi Kuribayashi's family had served six different emperors as samurai for five generations, so the young man's career was set. After studying in Canada and working as a military attaché in Washington DC in the 1920s, Kuribayashi headed home and served the imperial army in Manchuria and China. He was hand-picked to defend Iwo Jima by Prime Minister Hideki Tojo because of his military skill and knowledge of America.

- **Wrote haiku poems in his spare time.**
- **Received Order after death.**





American soldiers sate their hunger under the shelter of a plane wreck during a break in fighting.

AMERICANS

SOLDIERS	110,000 men
DIED	† 6,821 men

JAPANESE

SOLDIERS	18,591 men
DIED	† 18,375 men

old's legs and face – with blood all over his face he had to be carried away from the front.

Naughton witnessed the events from a trench, but gradually he'd become accustomed to comrades being severely injured or killed. The previous day Naughton had seen both Douglas and Johnson carried away wounded, and less than half of H Company's 246 complement came back.

Other companies from the 28th Marine Regiment were more fortunate. Sherman tanks destroyed more and more nests on the plateau in front of Mount Suribachi so infantrymen could struggle up the mountain slopes and engage in close combat with the enemy in their caves and bunkers. On the morning of 23rd February, one group of Americans finally reached the crater atop Iwo Jima's volcano.

At the exact same time, H Company's Nicholas arrived on board the hospital ship with a boat load of other wounded. As the American was hoisted from the Higgins boat on his stretcher, his countrymen raise the US flag on Mount Suribachi. Nicholas breathed a sigh of relief from his stretcher, and American soldiers on the ships and in the trenches of Iwo-Jima embraced each other.

"We thought that it was over – we figured it was the end, with the flag up there", Naughton remembered.

But Iwo Jima wasn't done with claiming American casualties.

203 of H Company's 246 men died or were wounded during the invasion of Iwo Jima. 19-year-old Jim Naughton from Illinois lost his right leg, but survived.

Tanks grilled enemy

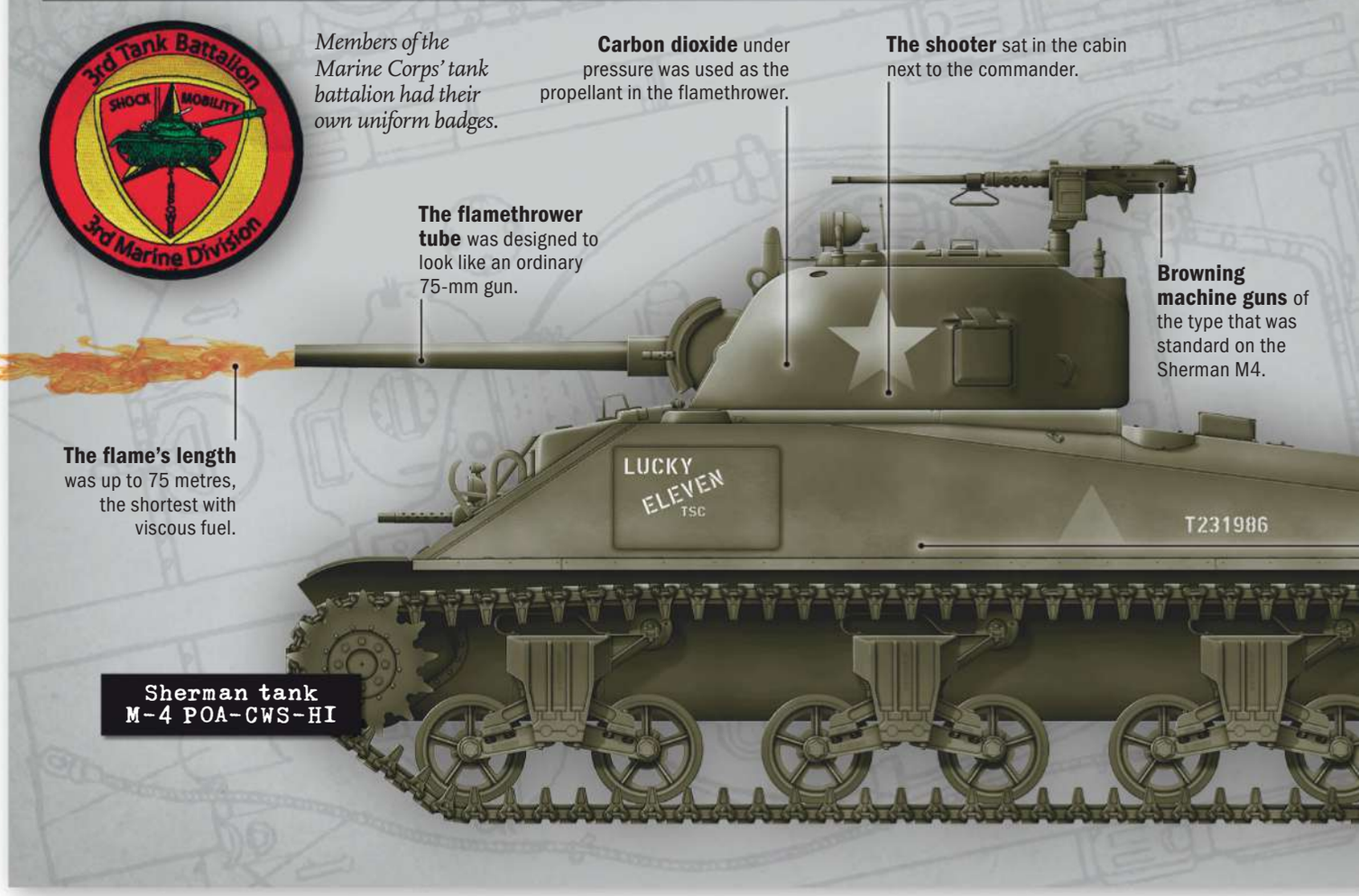
The Americans weren't aware that many kilometres of tunnels remained operational. From the hills the imperial army planned to fight to the last man.

After Mount Suribachi's occupation, the remnants of H Company and the 28th Marine Regiment were ordered to move in the opposite direction and assist other divisions. Iwo Jima's two runways were already captured after bloody battles, but the island's north-east – where a third runway was under construction – was still in enemy hands. The marching infantrymen discovered hundreds of caves that led into long tunnels. Finally,

FLAMETHROWER

Enemy was attacked with fire

The US invasion force deployed eight modified Sherman M4 tanks that spit deadly flames up to 75 metres away.



the Americans understood how the enemy was able to continue providing so much resistance, even though no Japanese were in sight.

American tactics gradually evolved. When a hiding place was revealed, specially constructed Sherman "Zippo" tanks with mounted flamethrowers rolled forward to burn the Japanese with sticky napalm flame.

On other occasions, the invasion force buried the enemy under stone and gravel by creeping into the caves and placing dynamite close to the openings. The task was dangerous, but effective. Often, however, the Japanese got wind of what the Americans were doing and managed to flee through the tunnel system.

Imperial troops also used the underground passages to drop on the Americans from the rear – particularly at night. The Japanese would emerge from secret trapdoors to attack the enemy from behind. Several times Naughton and his comrades were surprised by the emperor's soldiers who even pulled on US uniforms to avoid being revealed prematurely.



Soldiers on postal service are shown sorting letters to US troops.



US marines took cover where they could on the island of Iwo Jima.

The relentless Japanese attacks never seemed to end and gradually ground down many US troops mentally.

"You have visions of what combat might be like, but we never thought we'd begin anything like this. The loss there was just unbelievable. It was hell on earth that place, just unbelievable," Naughton recalled. "You feel hopeless when you're on there; you figure you're never going to get off". Naughton did manage to leave the island after two weeks of fighting, but unfortunately only because his leg had been ripped to pieces by a hand grenade. His leg had to be amputated, but Jim Naughton survived the war.

While Naughton fought for his life, his friends continued their slow advance and on 16th March, Fleet Admiral Nimitz said in a statement that the "battle for Iwo Island has been won" and that "organised resistance on Iwo Island ceased at 18.00". The announcement was far short of the truth, however, as General Kuribayashi's headquarters in a gorge in the island's north was not yet under Allied control. Nimitz's message was first and foremost a press stunt to alleviate discontent at home in the US, where people were horrified at the carnage. Kuribayashi and his soldiers did not care much for the enemy hope that the fighting could stop.

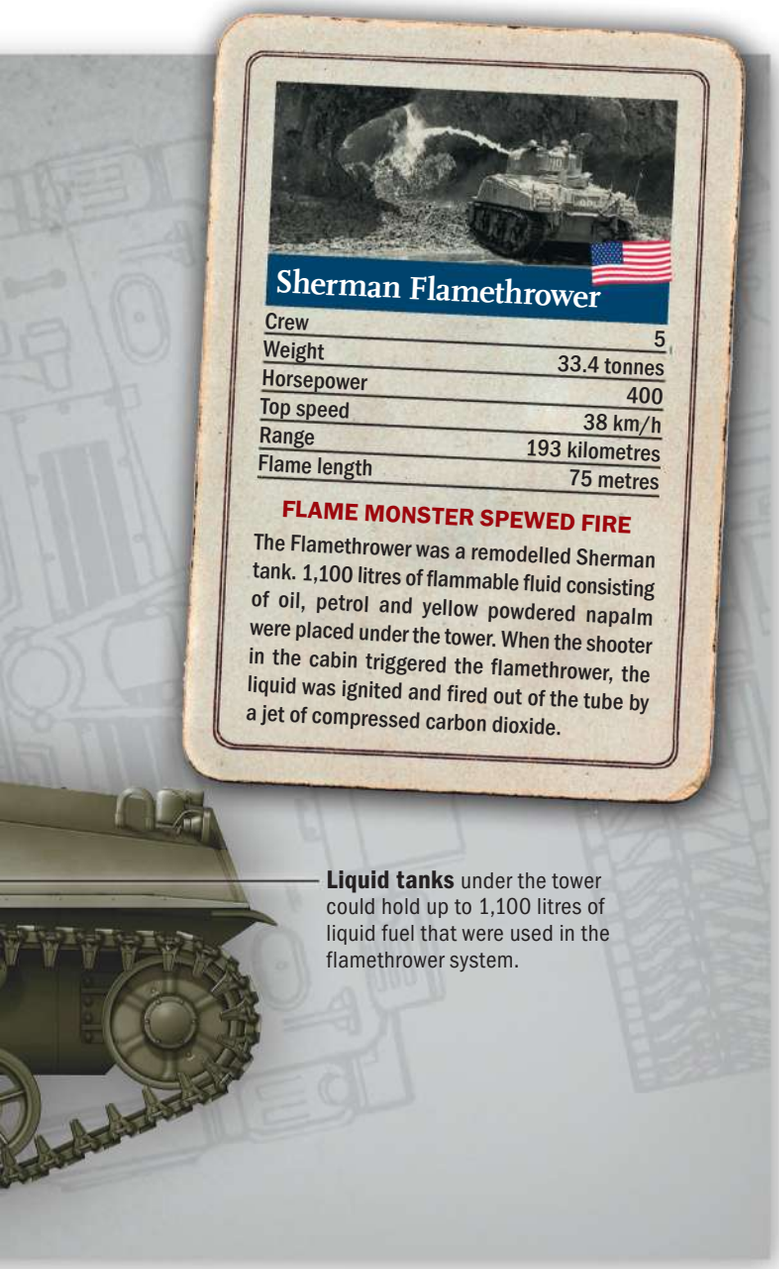
"The Americans advised us to surrender by loudspeaker, but we only laughed at their childish trick", Kuribayashi informed Tokyo over the radio – the general would die with honour.

General committed hara-kiri

Kuribayashi was aware that the end was near, and in his underground headquarters he could see many of his troops were suffering. Water and food reserves were almost exhausted, and when soldiers were injured, medics had to tear up uniforms to use the lint to stop the bleeding.

The Japanese continued to fight, but on 23rd March, defences were crumbling to the point where Kuribayashi chose to face the consequences. The general sliced his stomach open with a short sword, and then an officer cut off his head and buried the commander in the headquarters' cave.

Three days later the Americans launched a full assault and after major bloodshed, the marines threw explosives into the cave before a blast of volcanic magnitude filled the air. Although a few thousand Japanese remained underground in the tunnel systems, the destruction of Kuribayashi's headquarters was seen as the battle's end. 26th March officially became the date of Iwo Jima's conquest. But





A war reporter interviewed US soldiers after the nightmarish invasion was finally complete.

the sight of dead bodies and stink of rotting flesh remained in full view.

"There was half an acre of dead marines stretched out so close together that they blanketed the beach for 200 yards. The stench was overpowering. There, in mangled lots, not laid in neat rows, was part of the price paid for Iwo", wrote one US war correspondent.

One by one the bodies were buried and white crosses hammered into the beach's black sand, so soldiers returning from the battlefield could say goodbye to colleagues before leaving the hellish shore. Over 36 days, 6,821 Americans died, with more than 19,000 injured. When the survivors sailed away and looked back at the lonely island in the Pacific, most could hardly comprehend why the black knoll was worth so many lives.

Roosevelt went pale

During March, public sentiment against the invasion of Iwo Jima had risen. US newspapers reported daily on the carnage, and concerned readers made their feelings known.

"Please for God's sake stop sending our finest youth to be murdered on places like Iwo Jima. It is too much for boys to stand, too much for mothers and homes to take... Why can't objectives be accomplished some other way? It is most inhuman and awful – stop, stop", wrote a woman in an open letter to the Secretary of the Navy, published in the *Washington Post* on 17th March.

6,821
American soldiers died during the conquest of Iwo Jima, and 19,000 were injured. Many survivors were later critical of the decision to invade the island.

Even among upper circles, the massacre on the volcanic island deepened worry lines. President Roosevelt was appalled when he received the first casualties in late February:

"It was the first time in the war, through bad news and good, that anyone had seen the President gasp in horror", wrote one biographer, while another writer reported that Roosevelt had reminded his Chiefs of Staff that they'd promised that Operation Detachment would only last a few days.

For the same reason, Nimitz and other advocates of the invasion struggled to justify their actions. In reality, the Pacific Fleet command had noted only one reason for the invasion when the directive had been presented in October 1944:

"Long-range bombers should be provided with fighter support at the earliest practicable time", and Iwo Jima "is admirably suited as a fighter base for supporting long-range bombers", the plan argued. Once the volcanic island had been secured in late March, work immediately began so all three runways could be used.

The problem for Nimitz and his colleagues was simply that Iwo Jima never in fact became an important base for B-29 escorts. Only about 100 P-51 Mustang fighters were stationed on the island, and the fragile machines had difficulty flying in the area's harsh weather conditions where violent storms tore and ripped the engines so that pilots often ended up in the Pacific.

The flying units on Iwo Jima only managed to fly three measly escort missions in early April before the Army Air Forces dropped the escorts. Proponents of the invasion would have to look for better arguments.

Radar was too weak

Although nothing was listed in the Directive from October 1944, other reasons for capturing Iwo Jima had been discussed during the Chiefs of Staff meetings prior to the invasion, and new arguments were now put forth. Admiral Spruance pointed out that the Japanese radar on Iwo Jima could expose American B-29s heading from the Mariana Islands to the Japanese mainland, but again critics found the argument thin. The radar could only intercept signals within a radius of around 100 kilometres, and the long-range aircraft could easily fly in an arc to avoid Iwo Jima.

The dangers posed by the Japanese air base at Iwo Jima were also exaggerated, according to critics. True, it gave the enemy an opportunity to attack aircraft and ships in the area, while the recently captured Mariana Islands were also within reach, but in fact the Japanese did not really perform such raids. The empire didn't even have a permanent fighter unit stationed on



Sulphur buried underground forced Japanese soldiers to carry gas masks while digging the tunnels of Iwo Jima.

Iwo Jima, and the US's own reports from before the invasion hadn't registered a single shooting of a B-29 near the island.

The chorus of critics made it seem like Nimitz and his colleagues had acted rashly, and many soldiers' lives could have been saved if Iwo Jima had just been kept in check by the air force rather than being invaded. Between August 1944 and February 1945, 2,800 Liberator aircraft flew over Iwo Jima and dropped bombs on the runways for the price of just nine downed planes – if the Chiefs of Staff had simply continued this strategy, much blood need never have been spilled.

Iwo Jima gave bomber pilots a safe base

Admiral Ernest King, Chief of Naval Operations, and General George Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, had both pushed for an invasion and after the war held that capturing the volcanic island had been valuable.

"Iwo fields saved hundreds of battle-damaged B-29s, unable to make the full return flight to their bases in the Marianas", Marshall wrote in a report to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, while King argued that significantly more aircraft would have been lost if it had not been possible to land on Iwo Jima. The Admiral judged that "the lives [that would have been] lost at sea through this latter factor alone…exceeded the lives lost in the capture itself".

King may have leafed through a journal from the Air Force, which noted that "from 4th March… to the end of the war, 2,251 Superforts landed at Iwo". But over 80 percent of landings were to refuel, and often the island's runways were only a precautionary measure, so planes were not at major risk of developing problems if they had minor damage or the weather forecast was bad. Most aircraft would have probably reached the Marianas in any event, and even if a plane were to crash, the pilots in many cases would be rescued.

Nevertheless, the capture of Iwo Jima undoubtedly increased plane safety and the pilots themselves declared they felt safer now that they had at least the possibility of a halfway stop to and from Tokyo:

"Every man who served with the 20th Air Force… is eternally grateful", said a letter from the Air Force, which had the task of attacking Japan from the Mariana Islands.

Possible reason for the mystery

The decision to invade Iwo Jima was probably made with insufficient information. US commanders didn't know how well prepared the Japanese were, and estimated the casualties would be far lower than the eventual number.

PERSPECTIVE

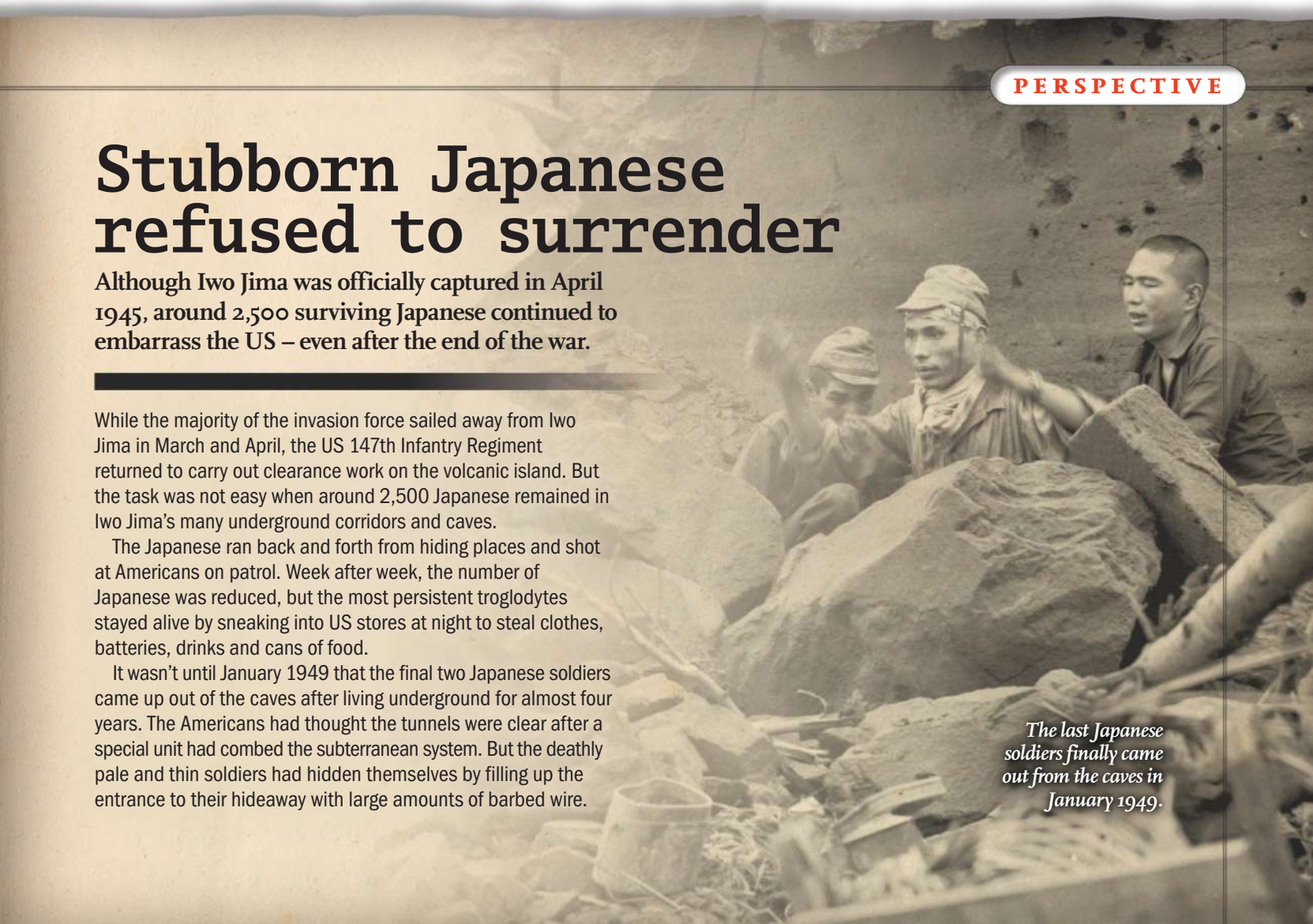
Stubborn Japanese refused to surrender

Although Iwo Jima was officially captured in April 1945, around 2,500 surviving Japanese continued to embarrass the US – even after the end of the war.

While the majority of the invasion force sailed away from Iwo Jima in March and April, the US 147th Infantry Regiment returned to carry out clearance work on the volcanic island. But the task was not easy when around 2,500 Japanese remained in Iwo Jima's many underground corridors and caves.

The Japanese ran back and forth from hiding places and shot at Americans on patrol. Week after week, the number of Japanese was reduced, but the most persistent troglodytes stayed alive by sneaking into US stores at night to steal clothes, batteries, drinks and cans of food.

It wasn't until January 1949 that the final two Japanese soldiers came up out of the caves after living underground for almost four years. The Americans had thought the tunnels were clear after a special unit had combed the subterranean system. But the deathly pale and thin soldiers had hidden themselves by filling up the entrance to their hideaway with large amounts of barbed wire.

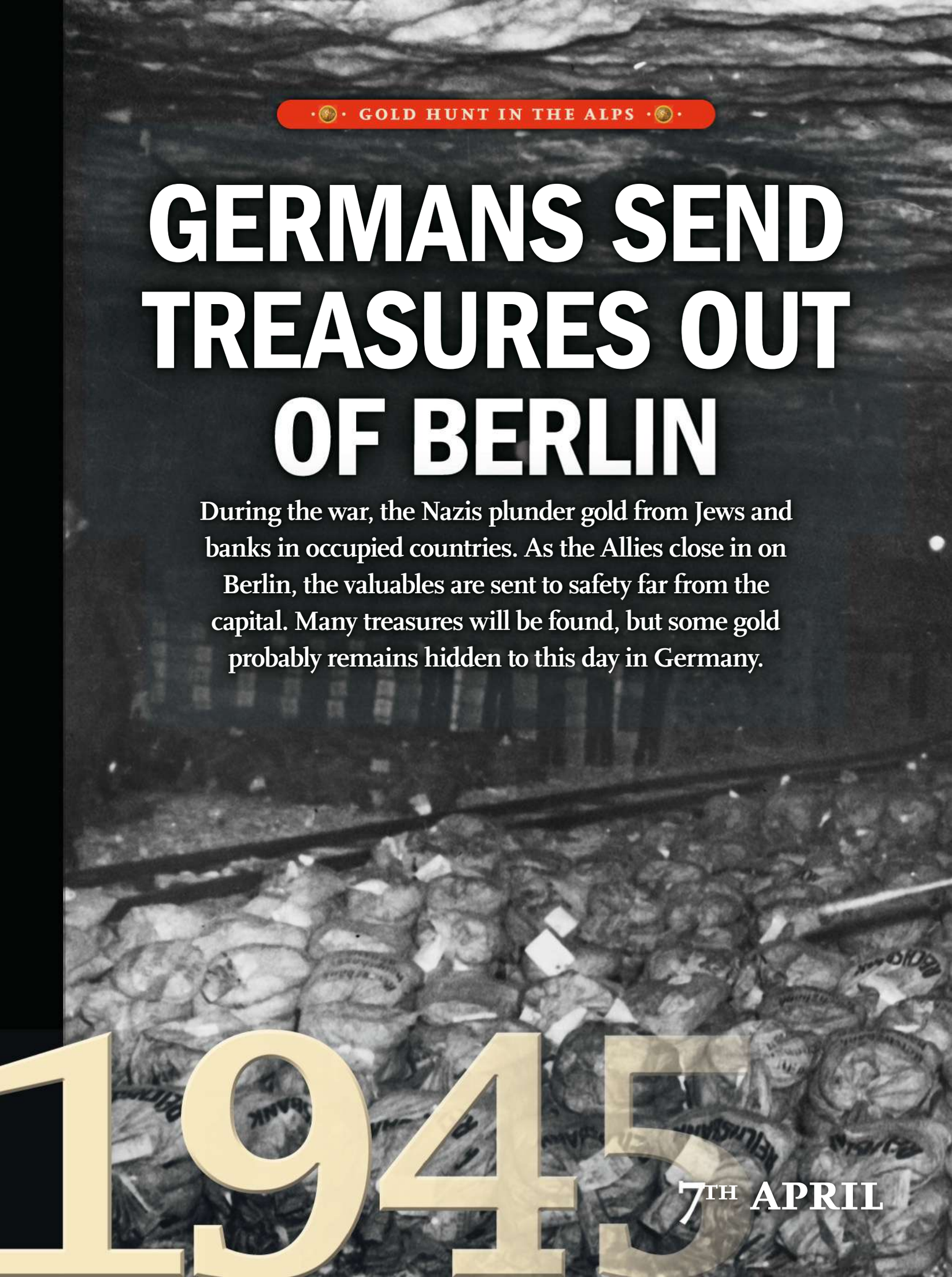


The last Japanese soldiers finally came out from the caves in January 1949.

GOLD HUNT IN THE ALPS

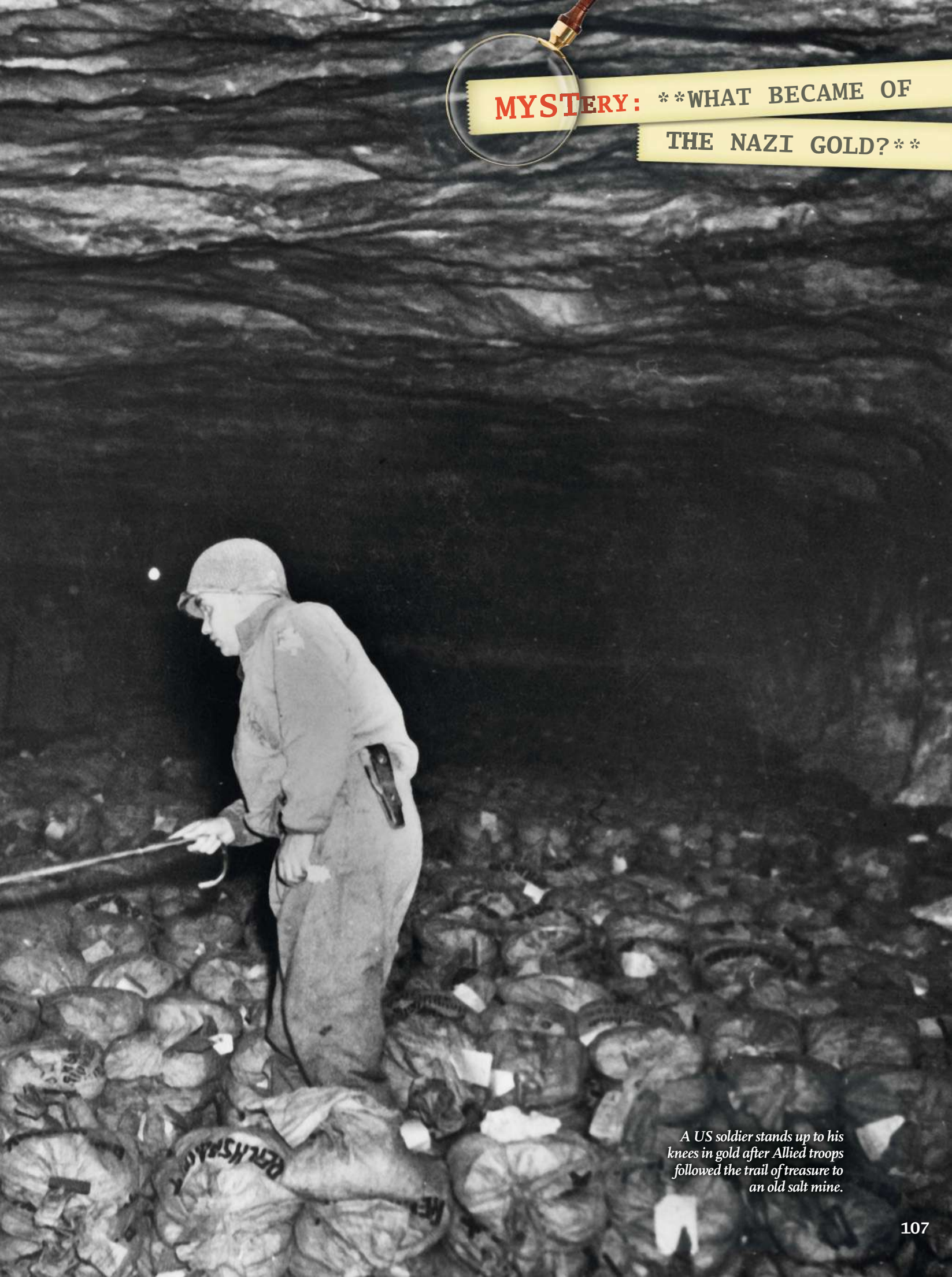
GERMANS SEND TREASURES OUT OF BERLIN

During the war, the Nazis plunder gold from Jews and banks in occupied countries. As the Allies close in on Berlin, the valuables are sent to safety far from the capital. Many treasures will be found, but some gold probably remains hidden to this day in Germany.



1945

7TH APRIL



A US soldier stands up to his knees in gold after Allied troops followed the trail of treasure to an old salt mine.

Germany, 1945

THE STAGE IS SET



Fanatical Nazis are planning a resistance movement once Germany falls. They will need money, so in the final days of the war large gold reserves are taken out of Berlin and stored across southern Germany. When US soldiers arrive in the area, the hunt is on for both the gold and those officers who know where it is.

An Aladdin's cave revealed itself to a group of American soldiers as the men entered a salt mine deep underneath the village of Merkers in central Germany. Vast quantities of precious stones, gold bars and coins stored in boxes and sacks emerged out of the dark in front of the speechless men. The mine was also found to contain precious paintings stacked together, as well as suitcases with belongings stolen from Jews and a host of other valuables and artworks.

The date was 7th April, 1945, and the war was nearing its climax. Allied troops had penetrated deep into Germany, and soldiers making their way through the war-torn country unearthed remarkable stories – including one that led by chance to the mine being discovered. On 4th April, the US 90th Division had occupied the Thuringia region, where Merkers was located. After taking control, two US military police officers had been patrolling the roads to – among other things – disarm German soldiers. They'd stopped two French women who'd said they'd been forced to leave their homeland to work in Germany. One was pregnant, so the soldiers offered to drive the women back to town.

As the car passed an old mine, the women began to talk about all the gold that the Nazis had hidden down there. The soldiers' ears pricked up as they were told how locals had been forced to carry treasures into the Kaiseroda mine, as it was known. The soldiers subsequently repeated the story after returning to headquarters.

It didn't take long for the report to make its way upward through the system where commanders heard the words "treasure" and decided to investigate. A specialised team was



A US engineering battalion found gold bullion when the soldiers went on a treasure hunt on Steinriegel mountain in Bavaria.

Gold was driven away

Nazi loot had to be taken away from Berlin at any cost, otherwise the treasures risked being destroyed by Allied bombing.

1 **3rd February, 1945:** Berlin is bombed. 2,000 people lose their lives, and the Reichsbank is damaged.

2 **9th February:** transport of valuables from the capital starts in trucks and trains.

3 **18th February:** the gold, along with works of art, is deposited in a mine near the town of Merkers. On 7th April the treasure is found by US soldiers.

4 **14th April:** last gold reserves from the Reichsbank leave Berlin.

5 **20th April:** the gold arrives at the Mittenwald barracks and Colonel Franz Pfeiffer immediately starts hiding the ingots.

6 **7th June:** American soldiers find the first gold bars on the Steinriegel. More is subsequently discovered.





Damage to Berlin was extensive, and even the Reichsbank was hit.



The barracks in Mittenwald where part of the Nazi gold was stored.

equipped to find the Kaiseroda mine, but found the hideaway closed. Only after they'd blasted through a wall were they able to reach the treasure chamber and be greeted by the lavish sight.

Gold had been moved

Two months earlier, on 3rd February, a much less appealing sight greeted Walther Funk, President of the Reichsbank, when he inspected damage in Berlin. A jumble of overturned furniture, broken windows and piles of bricks flooded the bank's building, which had just been hit during a devastating Allied bombing raid.

The Reichsbank had been hit directly 21 times, but the building was solid, and the vaults and armoured rooms containing Nazi Germany's gold reserves and many valuables were still intact. More bombing raids were inevitable, however, and Russian forces were closing in from the east.

Funk had to think fast. The president decided that the valuables had to be shipped out of Berlin as soon as possible and stored in a safe place. He convinced Hitler and several other leading Nazis that relocation was the only way to prevent the gold from falling into enemy hands.

On 9th February around 1,000 sacks of banknotes, 250 tonnes of gold and 400 tonnes of art treasures were dispatched to the Kaiseroda mine in Merkers. The former salt mine was chosen because it was extremely solidly constructed and was believed impossible to destroy, even if the place was subject to an Allied air attack. Funk chose to retain a smaller gold reserve at the Reichsbank in Berlin.

Most of the gold that was transferred out of Berlin had been seized from the central banks of occupied countries. But part of the loot had been robbed from Jews and other victims of Nazism – including dental gold removed after death in the gas chambers.

These seizures had allowed the Nazi regime to build huge gold reserves. Today historians estimate that the Reichsbank had a portfolio equivalent to 800 million dollars when the war in Europe ended, but the figure may well be

"We want to make such a… job of hiding it that finding it will be next to impossible"

Franz Pfeiffer, German colonel



905 refers to the purity of the gold. This ingot contains 90.5 percent gold.

The year 1938 was deliberately backdated to hide the fact the ingot was made during the war from stolen gold.

Degussas logo shows the Sun and Moon framed in a diamond shape.

T 99886 is the gold bar's serial number. Each ingot had a unique number.

1956 is the year when the bar was studied and tested for gold content.

Degussa is the German company that examined the ingot in 1956.



"Preußische Staatsmünze in Berlin" accounted for where the bar was manufactured.

higher. Some valuables had already been sent to safety in Switzerland.

Risky shipment

When Funk heard that the Americans had found gold in Merkers in April 1945, he decided that the last reserve also had to go – despite the high risk. Nazi Germany had gradually shrunk in size to a narrow corridor, so transportation would have to run the gauntlet between the western Allies and the Russians.

The gold was going south, as Funk knew of plans to continue the struggle after the Third Reich's official surrender. Southern Germany and Austria would be a natural starting point for any future guerrilla war, so to finance the resistance movement, the Reichsbank president decided to set the gold on a course towards the Alps.

The relocation began on 14th April with six Opel trucks, which Funk commissioned through the Berlin police. A group of Reichsbank employees and an SS escort accompanied the drivers. Along the way, the convoy were attacked by low-flying fighter aircraft several times, and the Germans took cover in forests and by the side of the road.

Finally – after an exhausting week – the convoy reached a Gebirgsjäger (mountain troops) barracks in Mittenwald near the border with Austria. At the same time a large number of foreign banknote bundles arrived, which had been sent by train from Berlin.

The Nazis had chosen barracks commander Colonel Franz Pfeiffer to guard the treasure. Pfeiffer was a 40-year-old war veteran with a spotless record and great sense of responsibility towards both superiors and subordinates, and he was a loyal supporter of Hitler. The colonel was also experienced in traversing the mountainous terrain. He was entrusted with the task of finding a suitable place to store the treasure.

Initially, gold and bank notes were stored in the barracks in Mittenwald while Pfeiffer selected the perfect hiding place. It's conceivable that the officer – despite his reputation – was already at this time pondering how he could get his hands on some of the gold. Pfeiffer – like many other foresighted Nazis – was undoubtedly aware of how the war would end and realised the hopelessness of leading resistance after an official capitulation.

Gold was taken on a mountain hike

On the evening of 20th April – on Hitler's birthday – Pfeiffer gathered a handful of his most trusted men and told the surprised soldiers of their mission:

"Gentlemen. We are faced with a task of great national importance – a task you must take with the utmost seriousness".

After a pause, the colonel continued.

"Our job now is to ensure the safe custody of this treasure. We want to make such a thorough job of hiding it that finding it will be next to impossible".

Hiding the gold would of course need to be carried out with the greatest secrecy. Pfeiffer's subordinate, Captain Hans Neuhauser, recommended the colonel initially deposit the gold in a house belonging to the local forest ranger, while his men prepared caches on the Steinriegel mountain, which Pfeiffer and Neuhauser had selected as the ideal hiding place.

The treasure was transported from the ranger's house through the inaccessible mountainous terrain on the backs of mules and stored on the mountain. But some of the men were unable to

"I intend to plunder and to do it thoroughly"

Hermann Göring, German Reichsmarschall



General Eisenhower was surprised by the scale of the find when he was shown around the mine in Merkers.

keep quiet, so after a few days Pfeiffer had to select new hideouts and move the gold again. To guard against the deposits being discovered all at once, the colonel divided his men into three teams, with each group only knowing the location of one portion of the treasure. When the work had been completed, Pfeiffer returned to barracks and let his soldiers go home. He then disguised himself as a forest ranger and hid in the mountains. Captain Neuhauser was the final man left on the spot, hiding in a narrow crevice. Here he could watch for any intruders on the mountain road from Mittenwald up to Steinriegel.

Tired colonel gave up

The game appeared to be up for the mountain troop leaders on 1st May, 1945. The Americans had taken Mittenwald, and the occupying forces now deployed the so-called T-Force – a unit specialising in securing German valuables, industry and technology before the resources were destroyed by the Nazis.

The Americans soon arrested the bank staff who'd travelled with the convoy from Berlin. Before long, officials had confessed to having brought gold from the Reichsbank to southern Germany, and several revealed about the transport to the Steinriegel. However, the bankers couldn't reveal the sites for only Pfeiffer and Neuhauser knew exactly where the gold was, and both men were hidden deep in the forest. For weeks, Pfeiffer remained at large. Several times he walked under cover of night to people he knew in Garmisch-Partenkirchen to receive food. But life on the run was not to the seasoned veteran's tastes.

Pfeiffer realised the Americans would not give up the hunt and that they'd catch him sooner or later, so through an intermediary he offered a trade: his freedom in exchange

1890-1960

NAME **WALTHER FUNK**

TITLE PRESIDENT OF THE REICHSBANK

Banker who hid the bars

President of the Reichsbank Walther Funk was charged in Nuremberg along with other top Nazis. Prosecutor Robert Jackson labelled him "The Banker of Gold Teeth" in reference to the Nazi practice of pulling gold teeth from concentration camp victims.

Funk himself claimed he was a small fish who had just followed orders. Still, he was sentenced to life imprisonment.



- **Was business editor of a newspaper.**
- **Was released in 1957 for health reasons.**

for revealing the gold's hiding places. Pfeiffer handed a card to the Americans, and by 7th June the occupying forces had recovered part of the treasure: 728 gold bars, each weighing 12.5 kilograms. Over the following days, several additional bars appeared around the Steinriegel.

During the search, the Americans also encountered Captain Neuhauser, who by that time had been hidden in the mountains for over a month. Neuhauser also offered to reveal several hiding places, again hoping to buy his freedom in return.



The Monuments Men received a medal for saving works of art for posterity.

Deposits were never found

Even though Pfeiffer and Neuhauser revealed many hiding places, both historians and treasure hunters believe that part of the gold is still missing. Speculation suggests that both officers and other participants in the operation managed to steal away one or two gold bars to hide on the Steinriegel and neighbouring Klausenkopf mountains for later use. It's likely, however, that some of the deposits were never recovered because the people involved couldn't find the hiding places again.

Even today, stories circulate about gold finds in the area. One example is the story of a treasure hunter who spotted six gold bars in the cleft of a rock, but after being caught out by a sudden storm sought shelter in his car. The man never managed to find the cleft again.

The stories aren't confirmed; but estimates of the amount of gold discovered support some treasure hunters' belief that there is still gold on the Steinriegel or elsewhere. If the bank lists and reports from eye witnesses are compared with inventories of gold found, the Americans allegedly overlooked 3.7 tonnes of the precious metal.

A small part of the missing gold may have ended up in the hands of Pfeiffer and Neuhauser. Pfeiffer succeeded in securing his freedom in exchange for revealing hiding places. After the war he emigrated to Argentina and was soon joined by several acquaintances. Without wealthy funds, such a journey would have been extremely difficult.

The treasure hunt continues

The possibility that gold still lies hidden in the mountains in southern Germany is enough to drive treasure hunters and adventurers out with metal detectors and spades. Every year the Steinriegel and Klausenkopf are popular destinations for groups of aspiring treasure hunters looking for a jackpot.

But the two mountains are not the only places where Nazi gold may be hidden. Over the years reports of gold discoveries emerged throughout Central Europe – on mountains, in lakes and in castle cellars. Particularly persistent rumours abound of gold in the depths of Lake Toplitz in Austria, although here nothing has ever officially been found other than fake banknotes.

Even outside of Europe, Nazis reportedly squirrelled away gold. In September 1943, four months after the German Afrika Korps had capitulated in Tunis, four SS men were alleged to have secretly collected six heavy steel chests of gold that Field Marshal Rommel had hidden in Libya. But shortly before the German ship reached safe haven in occupied Corsica, the vessel was attacked from the air by Allied aircraft and the Germans decided to throw the valuable cargo overboard. The French state and countless treasure hunters have vainly looked for gold on the seabed near the Corsican port of Bastia ever since.

Evidence lacking

A recent example of the continuing hunt for Nazi treasure dates from 2013, when Israeli journalist Yaron Svoray tried to locate

Art treasures vanished

Nazis looted priceless works of art. One of the greatest treasures is the legendary Amber Room, which has never been found.

The Madonna of Bruges by Michelangelo was one of countless paintings among those art treasures the Nazis looted from Jews, museums and churches in occupied countries. Most were recovered by special unit The Monuments Men.

A legendary treasure, the so-called Amber Room, is still missing, however. The Amber Room was a room covered with panels of gold and six tonnes of amber, which the Germans stole from Leningrad and brought to Königsberg. When the Red Army approached, the panels were dismantled and hidden, and have never been found.



After the war, around 60 members of special unit The Monuments Men continued to recover lost art.

gold at the bottom of Stolpsee lake, 70 kilometres north of Berlin, using sonar equipment. This was based on Herman Göring reportedly ordering the SS to dump boxes of gold in the lake in the war's final days. Svoray acted with support from the German authorities on a project to definitively clarify the existence of the treasure, but the tenacious Israeli found nothing of interest despite his best efforts.

Lack of evidence was also the theme when in 2015 two Poles claimed to have found a legendary train that disappeared during World War II in the Polish city of Wroclaw, formerly Breslau. The presumption was that there could be gold and other treasures stored on the train, which was to be driven into a tunnel and buried under large amounts of earth. Treasure hunters from near and far flocked to Wroclaw, but so far the authorities have denied the existence of such a train.

POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE MYSTERY

Most Nazi gold has likely now been found, thanks to the efforts of treasure hunters and the authorities. Nevertheless, individual gold bars are likely to still be on the Steinriegel and elsewhere.

PERSPECTIVE

Millions of fake pounds were dumped into the lake

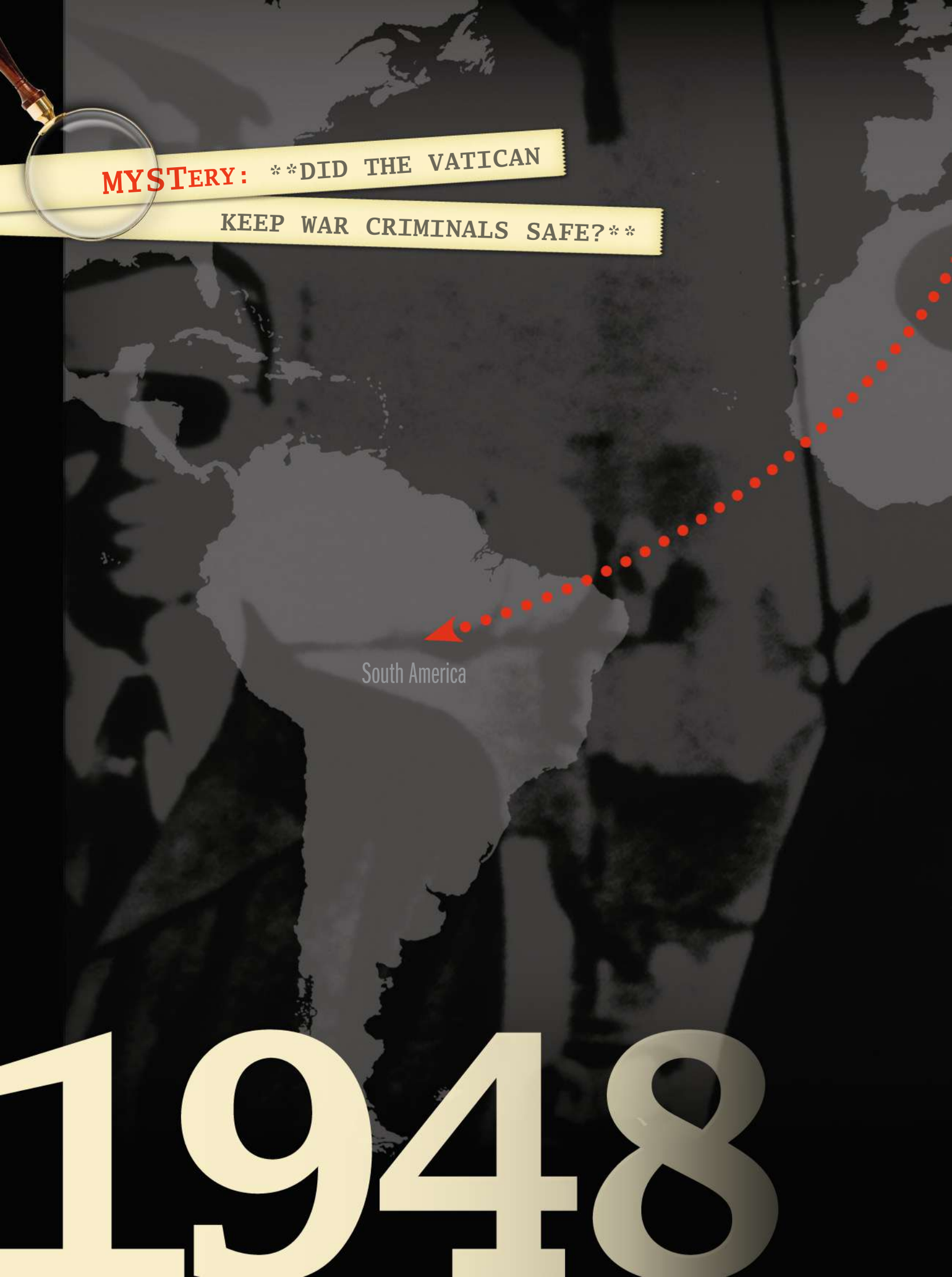
Persistent rumours abound that Nazi gold ended up in Lake Toplitz near Salzburg. Despite numerous attempts, divers have never found gold in the lake, but have unearthed millions of fake bank notes. Diving in the lake is dangerous, but fortune seekers still dream of a big find.

During the war the German navy had a secret research station that developed new types of weapons at Lake Toplitz, east of Salzburg in Austria. In the last days of the war, several large trucks arrived with heavy boxes, which were dumped into the lake. Many have since believed that the boxes contained Nazi gold. In the 1950s journalist Wolfgang Löhde from *Stern* magazine examined the case and rescued seven boxes, which were found to contain £73 million of fake British bank notes from a German counterfeiting project.

There was no gold in the boxes, however. Since then, many divers have attempted to find gold, but the lake is 100 metres deep and sunken logs halfway down constitute a serious hazard. At least one diver has died trying to find the lost Nazi gold.



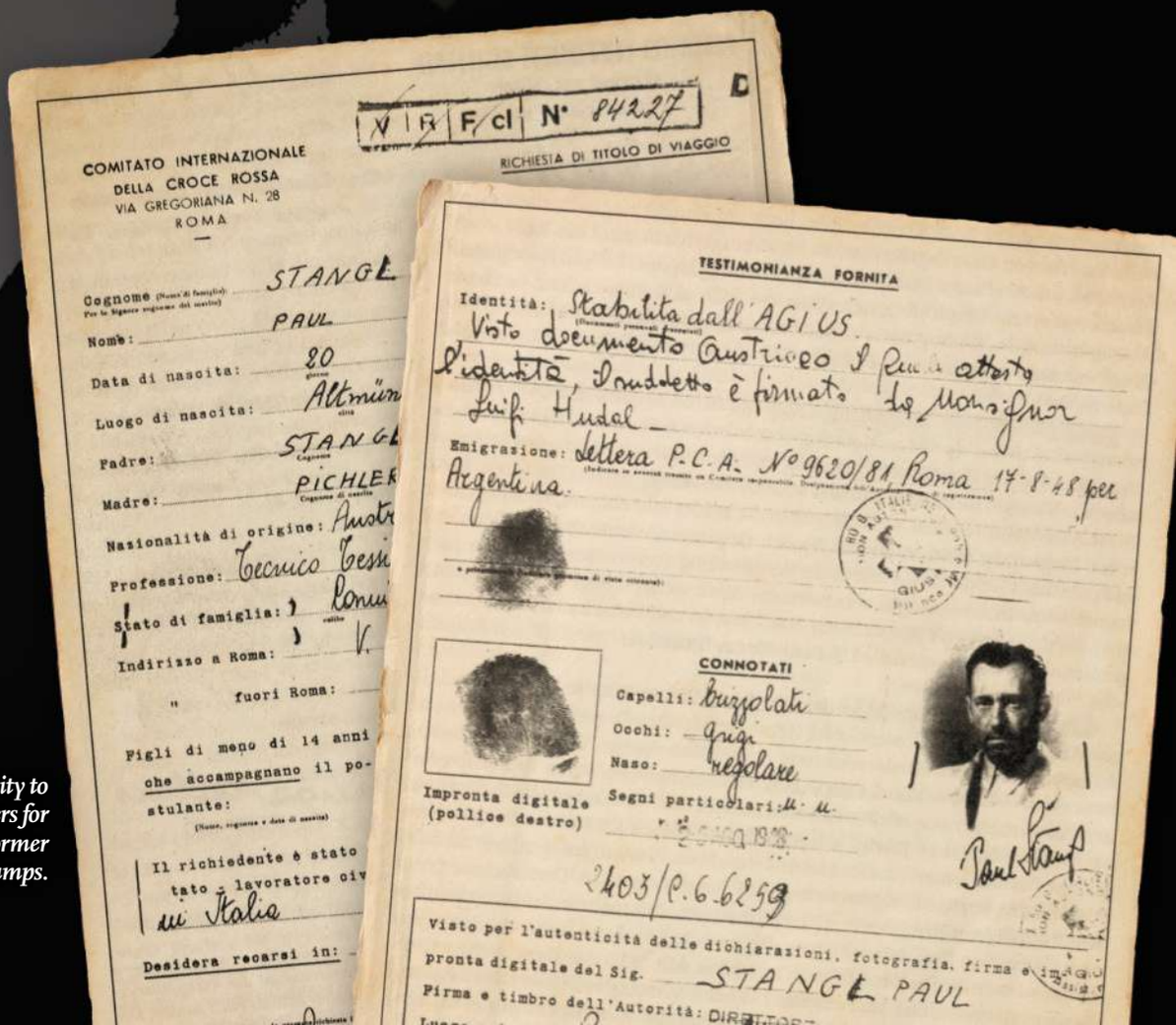
In 1959, magazine journalist Wolfgang Löhde fished millions of fake pounds out of Lake Toplitz.


MYSTERY: **DID THE VATICAN
KEEP WAR CRIMINALS SAFE?**
South America
1948

HITLER'S HENCHMEN ESCAPE

NAZI WAR CRIMINALS FLEE

After 1945 past war criminals escape from Germany through so-called "ratlines" to South America. Both Allied intelligence services and the Vatican in Rome are probably involved in the shady trafficking – and perhaps even the Pope himself.


COMITATO INTERNAZIONALE
DELLA CROCE ROSSA
VIA GREGORIANA N. 28
ROMA

V R F/cl N° 84227

RICHIESTA DI TITOLO DI VIAGGIO

Cognome: STANGL
Nome: PAUL
Data di nascita: 20
Luogo di nascita: Altmün
Padre: STANGL
Madre: PICHLER
Nazionalità di origine: Austr
Professione: Tecnico Tessi
Stato di famiglia: Conju
Indirizzo a Roma: V.
" fuori Roma:
Figli di meno di 14 anni che accompagnano il postulante:
Il richiedente è stato tato - lavoratore civ
in Italia
Desidera recarsi in:

TESTIMONIANZA FORNITA

Identità: Stabilita dall'AGIUS. Visto documento Austriaco il Rev. attesta l'identità, l'suddetto è firmato da Monsignor Luigi Hudal.
Emigrazione: lettera P.C.A. N° 9620/81 Roma 17-8-48 per Argentina.

CONNOTATI

Capelli: brizzolati
Occhi: grigi
Naso: regolare
Segni particolari:

Impronta digitale (pollice destro)

2403/P.6.6259

Visto per l'autenticità delle dichiarazioni, fotografia, firma e impronta digitale del Sig. STANGL PAUL
Firma e timbro dell'Autorità:

The Red Cross had the authority to issue passports and arranged papers for the likes of Franz Paul Stangl, former commandant of several KZ camps.

Italy, 1948

THE STAGE IS SET



After the war, the ground burns under many old Nazis from Hitler's Germany along with their allies in the occupied countries. Former war criminals fear arrest and being put on trial in Nuremberg. But help is at hand. A well-developed network stands ready to help the Nazis out of Europe.

"I ARRIVED IN ROME and walked across a bridge over the Tiber and suddenly found myself face to face with a former comrade: there, in the middle of Rome where there were millions of people... 'Are you on your way to Hudal?' He asked. I said yes, but I didn't know where to find him... I had no idea how one went about finding a bishop at the Vatican...

"It couldn't have taken me more than half an hour to get there. The Bishop came into the room where I was waiting and he held out both hands and said, 'You must be Franz Stangl. I was expecting you.'".

The man waiting in the Italian capital in the summer of 1948 was the former commandant of the Nazi extermination camps Sobibór and Treblinka – a notorious war criminal and mass murderer on the run. The Catholic bishop, who met him at an old palace on Via della Pace 20 steps from Piazza Navona in the Eternal City, was Alois Hudal.

Franz Stangl urgently needed help to escape prosecution and punishment. And he was far from the only one. When the war ended in the summer of 1945, Europe turned into a refugee chaos. More than a million people drove or hitched along dusty roads – mainly from east to west, away from the Russians. They were survivors of concentration camps, displaced or stateless persons, soldiers and anti-communists who did not want to live



Vatican coat of arms contains the keys to heaven.



Catholic priests salute Hitler. Many priests had some sympathy for Nazism, because the men of the Church saw fascist ideology as an effective protection against wicked communism. Some of the clergy were also willing to help the Nazis after the war.

under Soviet occupation. Within the massive wave of refugees hid thousands of war criminals: German SS soldiers and collaborators from the fascist regimes in Eastern Europe, camp commandants and "Einsatzgruppen", members of killer squads. Many of the war criminals had managed to stay out of sight and avoid arrest. Just as quietly the men slipped into society and took on small jobs, typically in agriculture. Refugees from the east often had no identification so the Nazis had no difficulty assuming a false identity to use in their new lives, sometimes for several years.

Priests were Nazi sympathisers

Meanwhile, supporters worked to organise a network that could help indicted war criminals out of Europe to places like the Middle East or South America, where sympathetic right-wing regimes awaited.

Among those willing to help were members of the Catholic Church. Some priests were in favour of Nazism – where its ideals were seen by the men of the church as the best bulwark against godless communism.

Already by 1944 the Vatican Relief Commission for refugees, Pontificia Commissione di Assistenza ai Profughi (PCA) had been founded. Officially, the PCA was a humanitarian organisation that helped refugees, especially Catholics, but a shady part of the Vatican organisation concerned itself with helping Nazi war criminals who were wanted for criminal acts during Hitler's regime. The PCA played a key role in establishing and operating escape routes out of Europe, which became known as ratlines.

Ratlines is ordinarily associated with escape routes used by secret agents and soldiers operating behind enemy lines if the situation became untenable, but the term became synonymous with the escape routes followed by former Nazis, especially those to South America.

Refugees found shelter in monasteries

From the summer of 1945 until well into the 1950s, the main ratline in Europe ran from Innsbruck across the Brenner Pass to German-speaking South Tyrol. Here, local traffickers arranged to smuggle refugees across the Alps. From South Tyrol, the route continued either across Rome or directly to Genoa, from where ships sailed the Nazis to Juan Perón's regime in Argentina or another of the South American continent's right-wing dictatorships.

The list of prominent Nazis who fled through the Italian ratline is long and includes names such as Josef Mengele, Klaus Barbie, Adolf Eichmann, Gerhard Bohne, Erich Priebke, Berthold Heilig, Ante Pavelic, Walter Rauff, Eduard Roschmann and Franz Stangl.

On their flight from Germany the wanted men got help from kind-hearted members of the Catholic Church.

"Roman Catholic priests, especially Franciscans [helped channel] fugitives from one monastery to the next until they were received by the Caritas organisation in Rome", Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal wrote about the extensive network of Catholic helpers.

One of the key figures in the hideous escape system was Austrian-born Bishop Alois Hudal. Between the years 1946-49 Hudal had five to six wanted Nazis living in his palace in Rome almost constantly. Hudal was both head of

ESCAPE ROUTES

THE RATLINE ESCAPE ROUTES WERE ACTIVE LONG AFTER THE WAR

1942

Vatican contacts in Argentina enquire about the possibility of immigration should fascist Catholics from Europe need refuge after the war.

1944

18TH APRIL

Pontificia Commissione di Assistenza ai Profughi, the Vatican Relief Commission for refugees, is created.



A Nazi logo was even added to the Red Cross in Germany.

1945

MARCH

US diplomat Allen Dulles launches secret negotiations with General Karl Wolff in Switzerland, concerning German surrender and protection of high-ranking German military personnel in exchange for a future alliance against the Soviet Union.

MAY

The war in Europe ends. Many former SS commanders, camp commanders and leading Nazis go underground.

1946

Ratlines through Austria and Italy start running, organised by – among others, Hudal – who holds several key positions in the Vatican. War criminals often sail to Argentina and other South American countries via the port of Genoa.

1951

The Red Cross cease issuing passports that the organisation had been licencing. The transport of war criminals from Germany starts to wane.

1952

Alois Hudal is forced to withdraw from all positions in the Vatican.



Parts of the Vatican in Rome pulled strings to help old Nazis on the run.



Franz Stangl was nicknamed "White Death" among the prisoners because he walked around in a white uniform jacket and carried a whip.

The Treblinka concentration camp was turned into a death factory in 1942 and 1943 by Franz Stangl.

the PCA's Austrian division and appointed by the Vatican with responsibility for ecclesiastical contact with detained German prisoners of war in Italy. The double position made it easy for the bishop to connect with German war criminals who felt the authorities closing in around them.

"I thank God that He opened my eyes and allowed me to visit and comfort many victims in their prisons and concentration camps and [to help] them escape with false identity papers", Hudal wrote in his memoirs.

Priests feared communism

The PCA's Austrian branch with Hudal at its head was not the only Vatican Relief Commission that was active in the work of procuring war criminals out of Europe. The Croatian branch also made a great effort. The Committee was headed by Father Krunoslav Draganovic, who like Hudal was a committed fascist and had been a fervent supporter of the Ustaša regime in Croatia – a German puppet state where hundreds of thousands of Jews and others were murdered.

But Hudal and Draganovic could not have helped without an extensive network of papal officials, priests and monks who felt varying degrees of sympathy for former Nazis.

While Hudal and Draganovic openly professed Nazi and fascist ideology, the motivation of many of the helpers was mainly the fear of communism. In fact, most of the clergy had previously been opposed to Nazism, but after the Battle of Stalingrad many changed their position. Now the communists were suddenly on the offensive, and a Soviet advance threatened to subjugate Christians throughout Eastern Europe. More and more priests believed that collaboration with Nazism and fascism was necessary to defend the Christian faith.

Most of the PCA's national sub-committees – the Polish, Slovenian and Hungarian – were like the Austrian and Croatian ones, led by individuals with strong anti-communist sympathies. These men did not question the individual refugee's identity and past, so long as he distanced himself from dreaded communism and officially acceded to the Catholic faith.

Nazis suddenly became believers

The requirement to be a Catholic was essential for the church network, which saw an opportunity to save Catholic souls. For the same reason, many former Nazis were baptised in the Catholic faith, even though they had previously been Protestants or atheists. Protestant Adolf Eichmann accepted the new baptism as an honorary membership, recognition of the "means that the Catholic Church has given me".

On the way to the ratlines the Catholic network not only gave criminals shelter, but also arranged new identities. The



Towards the end of the war many refugees flowed from east to west – shown here in Warsaw. War criminals, SS men and leading Nazis from concentration camps in Poland took advantage of the chaos to take on a new identity and disappear into the crowd.

work was carried out, paradoxically, in close cooperation with the International Red Cross.

Thousands of people who were fleeing through Europe in search of a new life, stood without papers: especially ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe who had been expelled following the collapse of the Nazi regime and had subsequently been left to cope alone by the Allies after the peace in May 1945. In order to resolve the situation, the Red Cross was given authority to issue passports. When the organisation stopped producing identity papers in 1951, it had issued over 120,000 passports. Many of the passports were made at the request of the Vatican Relief Commission, influenced by Alois Hudal and Krunoslav Draganovic.



A quarter of a million were murdered in the extermination camp at Sobibór in Poland.

The Red Cross did not check refugees' identities; that task was formally attached to the PCA, which issued a certificate to each refugee who confirmed their identity. And as people were first approved by the Vatican, the Red Cross asked no more questions.

"Of course the world and his wife recommended people to us, but we somehow relied on the papal aid commission (PCA), it was a good address", said Gertrude Dupuis, delegate for the post-war International Red Cross in Rome, in 1984.

The Pope probably knew

After the ratlines closed down during the 1950s, many historians have tried to clarify whether the Catholic Church's involvement in refugee work was only initiated by a few ideologically driven bishops – or whether the Pope and other people at the top of the Vatican were involved in the illegal smuggling operations. Officially, the Vatican denied any responsibility and dismissed the claim that the Pope would have known something of the war criminals, as "childish and absurd".

In the mid-1980s the Vatican established a writer's college to uncover papal policy during WWII. The 11-volume work categorically rejected the idea that the Vatican would have housed war criminals. The Vatican denies to this day that it had knowledge of the Catholic network, but has also refused to open the archives to historians.

The Vatican's denial is contrary to a top-secret report from 1947, which *The New York Times* published in 1984. After gaining access to CIA files the newspaper produced what today is known as the Vincent La Vista report. The report was compiled by the US Secret Service in Rome and found that in post-war years the Vatican had a general desire to help any refugee "regardless of nationality or political beliefs, as long as... they are anti-Communist and pro-Catholic Church." For Americans, there was no doubt that the Vatican as an organisation was involved in illegal refugee work.

The US Secret Service in Rome examined migration flows in Italy because hundreds of prisoners of war –

including, presumably, several war criminals – disappeared without a trace after escaping from a large prison camp in Rimini on the Adriatic Sea. The report marked top secret from 1947 describes in detail how escaped convicts found shelter in monasteries and buildings belonging to the Catholic Church and how Vatican offices equipped the indicted war criminals with new identities before helping with the necessary travel documents for onward flight.

Critics of the Vatican have also indicated that it is unlikely that Pius XII, who became Pope in 1939 and Giovanni Battista Montini – future Pope Paul VI – had not been aware of what the Vatican Relief Commission was involved in. Montini was chief administrative officer of the PCA and must have been aware of the work of the national committees. There is also evidence that Montini, as the Pope's Secretary of State and head of the PCA as late as 1949, still transferred funds for Hudal's refugee work – at a time when Hudal's help of Nazi war criminals was the subject of public discussion in the Italian media.

Before he became Pope, Pius XII bore the name Eugenio Pacelli, and was also known to be a fervent German supporter. For 12 years from 1917 he was nuncio (papal ambassador) in Munich and Berlin, and throughout the 1930s Pacelli worked closely with Hudal.

"Bishop Hudal was very close to Pope Pius – there is no doubt of that; they were friends", Bishop Jakob Weinbacher said later.

Allies helped the Nazis

Although the US report from the embassy in Rome caused a commotion in large parts of the central administration in Washington, the documents remained top secret, and the Allies responded to the Vatican with only a verbal protest. The United States did not want to compromise cooperation with the Vatican as the church's anti-communist line fitted well with British and American foreign policy. Nazism and fascism were defeated. The main enemy was now communism and the Soviet Union.



Father Karlo Petranovic (second from right) from Yugoslavia helped refugees pass through the port of Genoa.

In addition, historically, cooperation between the Allies and Vatican had been close. Catholic circles in the US continuously funded the Vatican Relief Commission, and since the early 1930s the British government had liaised with Vatican circles in Germany and the military, who wanted to depose Hitler.

At the same time, the Allies probably even had a hand in helping former Nazis avoid punishment. In spring 1945, future CIA Director Allen Dulles – with the Vatican as an intermediary – contacted the commander of the SS forces in Italy, General Karl Wolff. Officially, the goal was to save Allied soldiers' lives, but for Dulles the contact also had another purpose: to recruit Nazi officers as informants and spies for the Allies in the new battle against communism. The code name for the negotiations, which took place in Switzerland, was Operation Sunrise.

Recruitment of former Nazis increased as the relationship between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies deteriorated after the war. In the spring of 1946 the US and Britain set in motion a procedure to send SS men and wanted war criminals back to the Soviet zone. Instead, many, in collaboration with



NAME **ALOIS HUDAL**

TITLE CATHOLIC BISHOP

1885-1963

Priest was loyal Nazi

From Adolf Hitler's appointment, Bishop Alois Hudal had been keen on Nazi ideas. In the 1930s in Rome, he was known as the German bishop because he used the new Nazi German flag as a pennant on his car when he drove around the Italian capital.

Hudal saw a connection between the Catholic Church and Nazism, which he described in a book published in 1936. Both before and during the war he supported the fascist regime, and after peace in 1945, Hudal was the Vatican's representative for prisoners of war taken by the Allies. In this role, he helped many German refugees to flee to South America until he was eventually forced to resign.

- **Studied theology as a young man in Graz.**
- **Was forced from his official posts in 1952.**



Hudal published Die Grundlagen des Nationalsozialismus. The book tried to build bridges between Church and Nazism.

the Vatican, started new lives in the West. This included the nearly 10,000-strong Ukrainian Galicia SS corps that featured several named war criminals.

The collusion also included Klaus Barbie, known as the Butcher of Lyon. Although the former Gestapo chief was wanted by the French authorities, he was hired in 1947 as an agent of the US Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC), an intelligence unit, which was particularly active during the Cold War. In 1950 the German branch of CIC equipped Klaus Barbie with a new identity and sent him and his family out of the country via Genoa with Draganovic.

American cooperation with former top Nazis continued after the escape to Bolivia and was first revealed when in 1983 Barbie was arrested and extradited to France. During the trial in 1986, the US government repeatedly had to apologise officially to the French government.

Dictators welcomed former Nazis

While Barbie ended up being handed over, many former war criminals lived comfortably in South America, protected by benevolent regimes.

Ex-Nazis were particularly welcome in Argentina. The country's extremist right-wing government was enthusiastic about fascist thinking and Argentina needed highly skilled labour, which German-speaking immigrants could provide. Historians have identified more than 1,000 members of the German Nazi Party who emigrated to Argentina under their own name. In addition, a large number travelled to the country with a new identity.

When the refugees arrived, they were helped further by German emigrant associations and the Catholic Church. Many were employed in state administration or got jobs in branches of German companies such as Siemens, Krupp and Volkswagen.

Stangl, who met with Hudal in the summer of 1948, was one who went on to work in a Volkswagen factory outside Sao Paulo in Brazil.

After the meeting with the bishop, the former commander of the Treblinka extermination camp was sheltered by Hudal and able to work in a Catholic library, Germanicum, while waiting for a boat. When Hudal came with Stangl's Red Cross passport, the bishop had purposely asked the office to swap Stangl's two first names, Franz and Paul. His name was now Paul Franz Stangl. The pushy commander immediately noticed what had happened:

"They made a mistake... My name is Franz Paul Stangl".

But the bishop patted him reassuringly on the shoulder:

"Let sleeping dogs lie".

The dogs were first awakened almost 20 years later, when following massive international pressure Brazil handed over the former Nazi for prosecution. In 1970, at the court in Dusseldorf, Stangl was sentenced to life imprisonment for his involvement in the murder of at least 400,000 people. Franz Paul Stangl died in prison on 28th June, 1971.

POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE MYSTERY

The Vatican never admitted an official policy of helping war criminals. Yet, a number of individual priests undoubtedly assisted Nazis from Germany and other areas. And the Pope probably knew of the activities in one form or another.

South America was an ideal hideout

Many South American regimes were marked by fascist ideology and became natural places to take on ex-Nazis fleeing Europe.

Up to 9,000 war criminals fled from Europe according to newly opened South American archives – as well as Germans, there were Yugoslavs and Russians who'd aided the Nazi murder machine.

ARGENTINA was the favourite getaway, especially since the country's dictator Juan Perón provided a welcome sanctuary for highly-skilled German refugees.

5,000 people fled to Argentina.

BRAZIL also took in refugees. In addition, around 20,000 Germans legally immigrated to Brazil after the war.

1,500-2,000 came illegally to Brazil.

CHILE was also the destination for a large group: a colony of German emigrants in the country was called Colonia Dignidad.

500-1,000 former Nazis settled in Chile.

URUGUAY AND PARAGUAY also supported Nazis on the run. Paraguayan President Alfredo Stroessner was of German descent.

500 travelled to Uruguay and Paraguay.



Argentine president Juan Perón and his wife Evita received the fleeing Germans with open arms.

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“What is this nonsensical order… supposed to mean?”

Colonel Lieutenant Adolf Heusinger raged when Hitler issued a stop order for Dunkirk in May 1940. In the port city on France’s Channel coast, over 300,000 Allied soldiers stood with their backs to the sea. Later, military strategists would agree with the Lieutenant Colonel: Hitler’s order was a fatal mistake. The background for the order is one of many mysteries from World War II that historians are still discussing. Others include why Stalin ignored all warnings about German invasion, and what were Rudolf Hess’s plans when he flew to Britain in 1941? We examine these and more inside.

